Adventure

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"A Soldier and a Gentleman"

by Talbot Mundy

(Complete Novel)

HERE is a novel, the kind that you can't let go until you have absolutely finished.

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Vol. 7 ADVENTURE No. 2

Arthur Sullivant Hoffman—MANAGING EDITOR

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IN THIS issue is the account of one of his adventures by Captain Fritz Duquesne—Fritz L'Huguenot Joubert Duquesne, to give the whole of it—and at past Camp-Fires we've heard various bits from the full record of his life. At the Adventurers' Club—the New York chapter—and at other places where he has foregathered with his friends, some of us have heard some thrilling accounts of adventures here and there. But it struck me the other day that none of us had ever had a connected story of his life as a whole.

So I asked him to give me one for the Camp-Fire. In addition to being a writer and lecturer he was then also busy with preparations for his expedition with his wife and his cousin, the Vicomte de Rancougne, to the headwaters of the Amazon, but he found time hurriedly to jot down the main points. I shall leave it very much as he wrote it, though he expected me to "whip it into shape." It is in good enough shape as it is—the hurried, unstudied jotting down of his experiences.

CAPTAIN Duquesne, like a majority of the Boers, is half French and half Dutch. A direct descendant of Admiral Abraham Duquesne, one of the greatest sea-fighters France has ever had and the founder of a splendid race of fighting-men, for all the Duquesnes have served in army or navy and most of them have been killed in action. General Piet Joubert, who led the Boers to many a victory against blacks and British, is an uncle.

I was born in Pondoland, South Africa, during a fight with the Kaffirs, who had driven us into *laager*. A number of my relatives were killed protecting my young life and her who bore me.

My education commenced, so far as I remember, when I was taught to measure powder to load the numerous muzzle-loading rifles that we used to keep off the lions, leopards and hostile Kaffirs.

I was taught my A-B-C by my mother, and then my education was carried on by a tutor who was a fugitive from justice, I believe, an absconding bank cashier. The said education was interrupted by my being called on command three times to fight the Kaffirs before I was seventeen years old, once at 8 years, once at 10. At 13 I went hunting big game on the Zambesi for six months. Left there and crossed the Kalahari desert to Walfish Bay. Had a four days' running fight on the desert with the Herreos. Fifty of the Boer men killed by poisoned arrows from natives who dug holes in the ground and let us tread on them before they fired. After the tutor, an ordinary school and a touch of the South Africa College.

TOOK up the study of explosives, blew up everybody's stray dog, was prosecuted for fishing with dynamite, showed such knowledge of explosives in cross-examination that Paul Krüger sent me to learn military engineering.

On the ship I met the tutor who was responsible for my English and he persuaded me to take the money a kind and loving parent had given me for my needs and take a trip around the world. I did, and I paid the tutor's way. He got boozed on my pocket-money at any port where the "stagga juice" was available. Six sad months passed when Dad overtook me in Singapore. He had a heavy *sjambok* and both I and the English tutor got it where it hurt most. Eight months later I arrived at the French military school, where I studied the art of destroying my fellow human beings by the aid of mines, pits, dynamite, nitroglycerin, electricity and big guns. In the meantime I watched every maneuver I could get to, in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland and Austria.

WHEN the British started after our country I went home as scout, engineer and "intelligence officer" or spy, with a vast knowledge of the destructiveness of high explosives and a longing to try my theories on some real Englishmen; and I did. I blew them up at Colenso. Destroyed armored trains in Natal. Destroyed British retreats. I had a squad of dare-devil boys who used to ride around with from twenty to fifty pounds of dynamite caps and fuse to match in their saddle-bags.

At Dundee I fought a duel with an English Zulu while I was carrying despatches from Buffalo River to Eland's Laagte. He shot my horse under me. I killed him. A shell killed my second horse at Eland's Laagte and it rolled over me, breaking my arm. Afterward, when the British lancers charged on surrendered and wounded men, I got a thrust through my foot, the only part of me showing from under the horse. When night fell I was dragged from under my horse by some English girls who were doing the nurse business and before morning I managed, with a broken arm, a numbed body, and a split foot, to reach the Boer commander.

TOOK part in the siege of Ladysmith off and on when I was not too weak, and being unable to get about on my bad foot, I was given mounted duty, scouting.

Had my arm broken a second time in a hand-to-hand fight at O'Neal's farm. I fought the other fellow, a Natal carbineer, with my teeth. He is dead. I developed, while my arm was getting better—for I convalesced on horseback and my arm did not interfere with my riding—into a good scout, and gathering a number of kindred spirits, we scouted and sniped the Britishers. I had charge of an expedition against Stenacker's Horse in Lebombo. I kept them awake for three weeks, killing a few when the windage and light were good.

(*Continued on page 220*)

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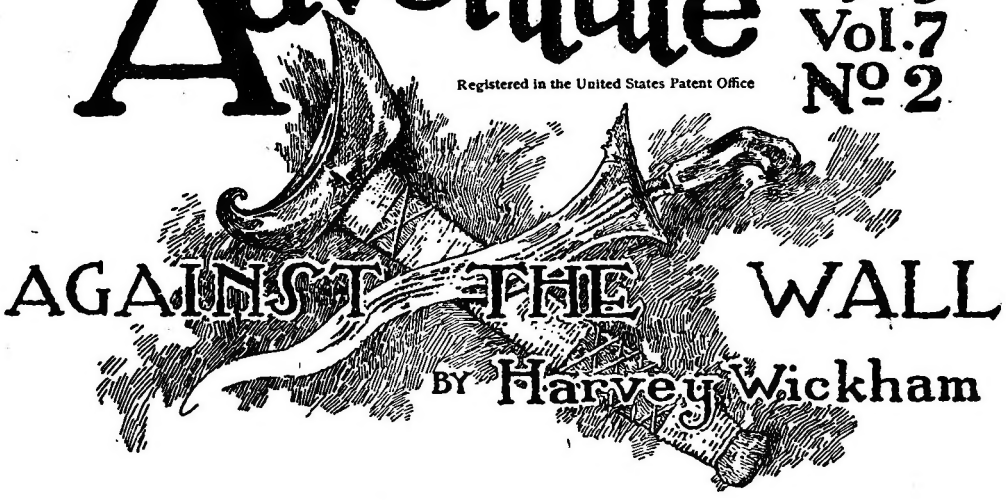

AGAINST THE WALL

BY Harvey Wickham

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST GOAL

NEWCOMERS always wondered. Just beyond the turn of youth, his hand already a little unsteady and his cheeks baggy and splotched, why should Grigley be called "the Governor"?

The unsteadiness might be honorably accounted for. It was said that he had been an expert telegrapher before nervousness drove him to the "bug," and finally out of the "brass-pounding" business altogether. Proud shoulders, just beginning to stoop, and a swinging gait hinted at some army experience.

But those blotches of red on a background of pasty gray spelled alcohol. There was no doubt about it. What could there be in a man, old at thirty-five and obviously with some inherent weakness of character, who had crept into a clerkship at the City Hall and given up when most men are just beginning to be ambitious?

Old at thirty-five! That should have told me. The wreck of a new ship bespeaks a terrific storm. But I, seeing nothing, gave him a very careless hand to shake when I first met Grigley face to face, and let him turn back, almost without a word, to his spidery typewriter, with which he was copying wills in a huge book. He did it with a hungry sort of look, like that of a man who misses the glories of some lost estate. But, as I've said, I saw nothing at the time.

And then I began to hear his story—here and there, in pieces that whetted curiosity. Finally, straying into the copying-room one rainy afternoon, I heard it from his own lips—a bare outline, afterwards filled in with considerable detail, but without loss to the original impression. Certainly he was no vulgar romancer, whatever else he might be.

Certainly, too, he deserved to be known by some high-sounding title. He had, as is proved, been weighed in the balance—weighed to the last grain, and found sufficient. Not a grain to spare, but yet sufficient for Fate's one purpose. And he had found his little world and lorded over it, feeling the high winds of sovereignty—God above, subjects below, and none but himself to be reckoned with in between. Mere success would have been anti-climax, tame after those days of meting out life and death, of battle and triumph over fierce, whirling circumstance.

HE HAD come to his world—an island in this case—as others have come to theirs, through dint of obeying impulse and ignoring consequences, but without any deliberate selection of his

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own. In a way he followed the line of least resistance until it became a question of choosing between the coward and hero in him.

The visible threads of cause reached back to a period when he was an operator at the San Francisco Ferry Building, Simmerman holding a similar job over in Oakland. If Simmerman hadn't been an ex-soldier, lonesome among scornful civilians, or if Grigley had been of the scorning sort, nothing might have happened.

As it was, an acquaintanceship, trickling at odd moments over the wire, soon thickened. Simmerman had known the Philippines in the old volunteer days, and the upshot was his reënlistment as a regular, and, simultaneously, the gay perjuring of Grigley before the recruiting-sergeant.

The boy's mother, living somewhere in the Middle West, threatened to put a spoke in fate's wheel by informing the War Department that he was barely twenty. But he frightened her into silence by a message that cunningly exaggerated the criminal character of his act and crushed her into acquiescence with a vision of prisons. By the time he was indeed twenty-one he found himself a first-class Sergeant in the Signal-Corps, stationed in the midst of his future kingdom, with Simmerman—now a Captain of constabulary—as his only white companion.

It was a beautiful place—to look at. In front of the nipa-constructed, bullet-inviting post-house, rolled the Sulu Sea with a coral-white beach fit to be lifted bodily into Mohammed's paradise. There at evening gathered the native women to greet the fishing-*salambas* and pearl-boats.

Back of the house were the rice paddies and coconut-trees. Farther up the slope, toward the crater of a slumbering volcano that cut the horizon off sixty degrees from the zenith, reached the green of a forest of hardwood. And every open space, save where the salt spray licked things bare, had its death-trap jungle of breast-high *cogon*-grass.

The only native village harbored barely five hundred souls; but seven tribes, each with its dato (or hereditary chief), held sway in the unexplored fastness of the upland. The nearest military base was a three-days' journey by land and water. Home was distant six thousand nautical miles. Measured by miles psychological, the distance was unutterable.

FOR garrison—Heaven knows what it was expected to accomplish—there were ten gaunt and bony Moros who had worn khaki for a year or more and were, for statistical purposes, reckoned as Christians. One, whose conversion was considered beyond question, spoke a little English and should have been classified as a Maccabebe half-breed. The only tongue intelligible at conversational lengths, however, belonged to the *ex-presidente* of the village. This, of course, is not counting the house-boy, the *mestiza*, and six Sikhs from Singapore, the latter—and as it would seem through a special design of Providence—but recently added to the force.

The friendship between the Captain and the Sergeant had gained in firmness, but lost in sentiment. In San Francisco both had been fond of forgetting the heart-breaking routine of their jobs by means of "times," in which Grigley's three loves, women, wine and song, played important parts. In the Philippines fundamental differences of character had come to the surface. Simmerman had taught his pupil the uselessness of revolvers in combat with bolos; the virtues of the short-barreled Winchester loaded with buckshot; and the fact that only fools went out after dark without a ten-pound cane of ironwood held protectingly before the face. In a land where the way to Paradise is supposed to lie through a river of Christian blood, and where an overenlightened sentiment, reaching out from Boston and other thought-centers, was always busy tying the army hand and foot with maxims drawn from Emerson's essays, mere survival was a mark of genius. Seeing that Grigley had the surviving gift, but had lost his convivial tendencies, Simmerman left him pretty much alone.

And Grigley was happy. He had found the lonely ease which he had hoped for—not yet the great and terrible thing which was to be his destiny.

CHAPTER II

THE SHOT IN THE NIGHT

GRIGLEY had grown lean and taciturn. He spent much of his time hunting. Simmerman, on the other hand, was "leading the life of the country," had grown fat,

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and drank too much. One evening he surprised the Sergeant by asking him if he believed in God.

"Because it's getting me," he went on. "This infernal country is getting me. I ought to have quit long ago while I had a chance."

Grigley passed this suggestion of a guilty conscience by as mere homesickness. He had not yet come to that point in his career where he had to take notice of every trifle. Perhaps he shut his ears to the warning voices that may well have begun to sound within him. He did not want to be routed out of his niche.

That night he took no more than his usual precautions. He undressed in the full glare of the coconut-oil lamp (it was quite dazzling against the inky background of the Philippine Islands' night), donned his thinnest pajamas (for it was hot), and stood conspicuous by the side of his bed squarely in range of the unglazed windows for a moment before putting out the light.

Immediately afterward, with as little noise as possible, he dragged the flimsy iron bedstead half way across the floor. The casters had been taken off and each leg stood in a tomato-can half filled with "insect-trap"—a circumstance which considerably increased the difficulty of the maneuver.

There had been a resumption of night-firing of late, and he thought it worth while thus to expose himself for a few seconds for the privilege of hiding till morning in the room's unsuspected depths. The Captain, he knew, chose to lie in a heavy, Spanish bedstead, too fuddled for any precautions. But to Grigley, who had no fatalism, they were the ordinary exercise of common sense. Once beneath the mosquito-netting, he slept with the log-like abandon of a child.

It must have been about midnight that a sharp sound exploded distantly in his dreams. He turned half over, muttered a disturbed curse, and picked up the snore where he had dropped it. As the Moros always shot one way and turned their heads another, thus annulling the efforts of a misguided Uncle Sam to make them death incarnate by the careless distribution of firearms, a soldier soon got used to this sort of popping. It was a more alarming sound—the pounding of a fist upon the door—which eventually awakened him.

GRIGLEY reached for his sawed-off Winchester—the terrible "riot-gun" reserved for emergencies—slipped out of bed and tiptoed across the matting.

"Who's there?" he called.

"Me, sir," said a voice. "The Captain——"

"What about the Captain? Is he sick?"

"He is dead."

Grigley's nerves gave a superstitious jerk. Could it be possible there was something in premonitions such as Simmerman's? Was the world, so long blissfully aloof, going to lean suddenly for support upon the shoulders of an unwilling Sergeant? Indeed it was. But for a moment he pooh-hooed the idea.

"You'll have to think up some better yarn than that," he cried, "if you want to get a crack at me. Run away, or I'll shoot you full of holes."

"For the love of Heaven! It is as I tell your honor. I am Namiban, the Sikh—no lying, Mohammedan dog."

One of the Sikhs! That put rather a different face on it. He was inclined to trust the Sikhs. Doubtless the post's specimens would be found in a pinch to be rather poor representatives of their kind: They were too far from Hindustan to promise well. Yet they were Sikhs—a sect famous for its dreamers in times of peace and for its fighters in times of war.

However, it might be a plot.

"Stand back three paces, whoever you are," he ordered. "Now speak. Let me hear where you've moved to."

"Yes, sir." The voice shook.

"Light a match. Have you got one?"

"Yes—yes."

"Strike it and hold up both hands. I'm coming out. If you're not alone, or if you're in any other position—— You savvy?"

"Yes, yes," jabbered the Sikh.

Grigley waited until he saw the gleam of the match; and then, having silently drawn the bolt, flung up the door (its hinges were at the top) and leaped forth, rifle in readiness. A single figure stood illuminated. And then the flickering flame went out in the draft, making everything blacker than ever.

"Come in," directed the Sergeant, in a lower voice.

Namiban entered—tall, graceful, stoop-shouldered, his teeth chattering. Infidel

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that he was, there was no counting the pieces his body would make, should the Prophet-worshiping garrison take to mutiny. Grigley, seeing that the fellow at least believed himself to be telling the truth, demanded details.

"Come and see," was all that the Sikh could say.

They crossed the wide, open compound, about the four sides of which the post-house was built, a battered moon in the ruins of its third quarter coming out from behind a flying cloud to guide their footsteps. In the Captain's room it threw a peaceful light upon a pillowed head.

"He's only asleep," breathed the Sergeant. "I say, Jim!"

There was no response. A glass and bottle on a stand beside the bed indicated how desperately of late the Captain had been searching for courage. Grigley sniffed disapprovingly. But why disturb a man who, in his waking moments, was bothered by a nameless dread?

He took a step toward the door. Then he stopped. The peace of Simmerman's face was reassuring. But that ghost of an odor which tainted the subtile sweetness of the night—it wasn't altogether of whisky, after all. Could it be of gunpowder?

Grigley went back to the bedside and laid his hand upon the Captain's shoulder. The next instant he drew back, his rifle alert, his eyes searching corners for an ambuscade.

"Heavens!" he ejaculated, as his glance returned to the prone figure. "Good Heavens! Poor old Jim!"

For at the first disturbance of the shoulder there had come a gurgling sound. The pillow showed a sudden splash—black under the moon but promising to be red in daylight. A ball that had entered between the ribs of the sleeper's back had come out at the jugular. The pillow, stuffed comfortably about the neck, had been stopping the worst of the flow.

THE Sergeant was effectually ousted from his niche. He was the commander of a collection of huts, built with side walls touching, about a useless parade-ground. American occupation, barring a few padlocks and other trifling fixtures, had added nothing to the defenses provided by its native architect—and these were a nipa thatch equally good at turning rain and inviting fire, and sides of the same material woven around a light frame-work of bamboo, about as bullet-proof as a palm-leaf fan.

Over it, heretofore, there had hung a mantle of awe. In spite of innumerable attacks, no white man had until now been killed within its bounds. With its supposed invulnerability suddenly ripped it would be about as safe as the jaws of death. In a few hours the whole island, peopled by untamed native tribes acknowledging no rule but that of their datos, would be reeling and roaring in rebellion. Had there been time to think, Grigley might have made the most of the moment—have rushed to the beach, seized a boat, and escaped.

But there was no time to think. Moreover, the eyes of the Sikh were upon him, looking for directions. The world, which had gone on for so long without giving Grigley a second thought, now needed him. It was a novel situation, half terrible, half vexatious. But something that had lain unguessed in the depths of his nature rose up to meet it. Turning quietly to his quaking companion, he said:

"Well, Jim is done for, and he never knew what hurt him. There's two hundred stand of rifles in the gun-shed. We'll have to move lively to get there in time."

CHAPTER III

THE PADLOCK

GRIGLEY, with the Sikh at his heels, emerged upon the compound. The place should have been swarming like a disturbed nest of hornets. But it wasn't. The moon had gone back behind the clouds. The chill of murder was in the very air.

Frankly he wished himself in San Francisco, enduring the grind of underpaid labor and the insolence of civilian bosses. The heroic sprout, only half-sprouted, failed to enable him to relish the situation.

He advanced cautiously toward the shed. The door was closed, hasp and padlock in place; and like the rest of the station it was fairly steeped in silence.

The Sergeant straightened up and strained his ears, turning his head slowly this way and that. The only sound on earth came from the wilds—the melancholy beat of a far-off tom-tom and fitful snatches of a mournful chant.

There is something in the monotonous

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music of the Southern Philippines which, stealing through the solitude of a tropic night, will find, if anything will, the weak spot of a soldier's soul. Grigley had listened to such sounds for hours, conscious only of a pleasing languor. Now, however, he felt their menace. They spoke of distant preparations for battle. There is no doubt about it; he was afraid.

And there wasn't at that moment very much to chain him to his duty. He had not yet begun to think of the woman in the case. Besides, she had belonged to the Captain and was quartered in the village.

He already doubted the fidelity of the Moro garrison. True men would have given some sign of existence long ere this. There were only himself and half a dozen Sikhs to think about.

And yet, instead of making for the beach he began a careful reconnoiter. Chance had reached out and dealt him its accolade. He was no longer the telegrapher. He was—magic words—he was *in command.*

The post-house was a one-story affair containing eight rooms, one at each corner and one in the middle of each side. The Captain had occupied an L-shaped apartment at the north of the entrance. The L at the south was unused, and the middle of the front was taken up by a sort of general quarters, having one door that opened out on a shaded platform or veranda and another in on the compound. All other doors gave upon the compound only.

As the Sergeant's quarters were in the corner diagonally opposite the Captain's (the remaining corner being devoted to the *cocina*, or kitchen, where the house-boy slept and the provisions were stored), the garrison had been bunked in the three remaining rooms. In the one between Grigley and the boy were quartered the Sikhs. The enlisted Moros had been divided equally between the other two cubicles—five in what was called the north barrack and five in the south.

BOTH of the barracks he now found empty, as he did the *cocina*. In the Sikhs' quarters a large hookah, its long rubber tubes stretched coilingly about it like the tentacles of an octopus, distilled the scent of tobacco from the center of the earthen floor. The Sikhs themselves were rolled up in their blankets, as if asleep.

"Traitors!" sniffed the Sergeant.

"No traitor—only very much scare," corrected Namiban, who, though still the mere rag of a man, had yet the ability to smile.

The smile must have strengthened the Sergeant—or maybe it was the sense of moral superiority which he felt in regard to the pretended sleepers. Anyway, he found courage to take a turn alone outside the walls, with no protection but the doubtful friendship of the darkness and his "riot-gun."

Having discovered no sign of a sentry, he returned to the gun-shed, this time placing his ear to the crack of the door. It was like listening at the door of a vault, and he considered it himself to be a very foolish proceeding. It was easy to imagine that the garrison had gathered at some secret rendezvous, but how could there be any one in the shed when the padlock and staple, whose newness glistened through the dimness, advertised so palpably that the place was locked?

They advertised too palpably—that was it. Grigley reached out his hand. Staple and padlock came away at a touch.

Though he had moved with the stealthiness of a robber, he inadvertently let the doctored fixtures fall to the ground. They made considerable clatter. Immediately there was a stir from within; then a gleam of light; then a crash. The Sergeant jerked the door—this one was hinged American fashion—open to its full width. Before him stood a silhouetted Moro, bolo upraised, ready, now that he and his co-conspirators were discovered, to smash the bar which held the weapons fast in the gun-rack.

"No you don't!" bellowed the Sergeant, leveling his Winchester from his hip.

The bolo dropped; its wielder shrank back. At the same time some one who had been holding aloft a blazing splinter put it out. Intense darkness descended.

But the Sergeant's pupils, rapidly adjusting themselves, permitted him to discover a dim mass of humanity huddling in the depths of the shed. Here were the savages who only a few hours before had been American soldiers. They were supplied with cartridge-belts, no doubt well filled with pilfered ammunition. And in each hand there glittered some devilish pattern of native edged steel.

YET, farther and farther they shrank from the short-barreled rifle. They knew what a terribly efficient instrument it was for the tearing of souls

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from bodies. Grigley might have converted the shed into a shambles, and a wise finger itched upon the trigger. But he was not yet hardened. And countless cautious, temporizing orders from headquarters still echoed in his memory.

"Take off your belts. Throw your knives on the ground," he commanded, piecing out his words with pantomime. "Now march out. Hands up, everybody!"

The Moros obeyed. He felt each one over for concealed weapons. Then he counted noses. Where there should have been ten there were but nine. Tiassi, a sentinel who had been posted beneath the outer windows of the Captain's room, was missing. But at the time that seemed rather to simplify matters.

Calling to the Sikhs, he bade them scour the premises for rope. Mild-eyed, timid, inexplicable, yet members of the "war-caste," they came out of hiding, and eventually discovered a set of rawhide carabao-harness which proved to be the very thing.

"Cut it up and tie the prisoners' elbows behind their backs. Fasten their ankles together," he ordered. "And tie them tight. Remember, this is no picnic."

No, it was no picnic. He had been thinking about that hasp and padlock. It must have been a clever fellow who had thought of restoring them to a specious totality after the Moros got into the shed—much cleverer than Tiassi could possibly be. There was something, in fact, in the extreme cunning of the trick which suggested, or ought to have suggested, the work of a white man.

CHAPTER IV

PROVIDENCE

AND yet it was to a white man—and a Spaniard to boot—that the Sergeant turned in his extremity.

"You know Fernando Quentin, the village *presidente?*" he asked of Namiban. "Find him and see if you can get him to come here."

If the *presidente* wouldn't come—— Well, that would be time enough to begin to think about it. For the moment Grigley simply didn't dare to indulge in sinister speculations. He needed every ounce of his wit and courage.

The prisoners lay about, helpless as so many bundles of merchandise, and apparently as harmless. Nevertheless, the moment Namiban had gone he had them carried back into the shed. It was no time to take unnecessary chances. The hasp he refastened with a new staple.

Four Sikhs were set to work carrying the guns and ammunition which had been taken from the shed—and also the knives of the prisoners—to an improvised arsenal in the Sergeant's bedroom. Their instructions were to prepare the Captain's body for burial as soon as the more urgent task was finished. One, fully armed, was left on guard. Grigley retired to make his report.

A fine time, truly, to manacle his initiative with orders dictated by some sleepy officer about to be awakened at Zamboanga! But he was not yet so fond of his burden as not to be willing to lay it, soldier-like, upon the shoulders of a superior. Mere force of habit would have been sufficient to lead him to that table of shining instruments which made his sleeping-place a ganglion in the electric nerve-system of the American possessions.

"Z b, Z b, Z b," clicked the telegraph, as he mechanically rapped out the headquarters call.

The response being slow in coming, he had time to consider. Nobody had ever dealt with the datos as one familiar with their customs might deal. They had been permitted to think that the American Government was weak and cowardly. Always anxious about the sentimental vote at home, Washington had long indulged in the fatal pretense that there was no war. Soldiers merely died—unavenged.

And yet there was an old superstition that the Christian God had once turned one of the Prophet's children into a pig. Certainly the Moros were dreadfully afraid of swine-flesh. There was a wild boar's carcass hanging in the *cocina* at that very minute. A man with a strong hand might yet do something with it—at least to gain time.

A strong hand? Grigley knew full well that the first order would be to rely upon moral suasion, to respect all native prejudices, and above all things not to kill anybody.

BUT it was too late, now. The Zamboanga operator had awakened from his nap and answered.

Grigley began, in the cold, crisp shorthand of the Phillips code, to relate what

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had happened. He had reached that part where the garrison was being tied by the heels with rawhide when the operator broke in—broke in most astoundingly with incredulous dot-and-dash laughter.

"How do you manage it, Grig? Your Morse is as steady as a clock. But what a head you must have! I thought you were one of the water-wagon men."

Grigley, trying like a good soldier to get along with as little fuss as possible, didn't at first recognize what fate was thrusting upon him.

"I'm as sober as you are," he answered. "But there's no time to chew the rag. Give my report to the Colonel."

"The Islands are certainly the devil!" clicked the complacent sounder. "You're the third man that's gone bug-house this week. Take it from me, none of your troubles have really happened. I don't want to have to tell the Colonel that you're tipped in the head. Come! I'm going to wait and give you a chance to pull yourself together."

A chance! That was what it was. The Sergeant saw it at last. Sudden insanity in the wilderness was sadly common. It had almost ruined the efficiency of the Signal-Corps. If they thought him crazy, why not make the most of it?

"Whether you hand in my report or not is up to you," he clattered back.

Then he screwed down the armature of the sounder—a just sufficient indication of a disordered brain to make the other operator most likely to let a considerable period elapse before doing anything at all. Thus did Providence, in urgent need of a hero, craftily lay its plans.

CHAPTER V

THE MESTIZA

IT WAS now the hour when, in the temperate zone, the east was beginning to turn gray. But there, south of Cancer, night was still as black as a bombshell, giving no hint of its early intention to explode into morning. The moon had deserted its post and the stars were still smothered by clouds. An hour, truly, after danger's own heart.

Grigley felt his way into the compound. The distant beat of the tom-tom had ceased. There was no more chanting. But from without the walls there came a vague, pervasive murmur, like the purr of the breakers down on the beach, but nearer and less friendly. It might be the early breeze moving among the tall *cogon*-grass. Or it might be the stir of hundreds of brown forms, wriggling in from the wilderness like an army of cobras.

The Sergeant listened intently and decided that it was only the wind. But it served to remind him that the Captain's *mestiza* was still in the village and unprotected. Let it now be but the wind, it would be the brown forms soon enough. At all hazards the woman must be brought to the post-house.

IT WAS no desire for a personal interview which led him to undertake the mission in person. Maria Gutez was half Filipino, and to that extent the sort of a woman he understood well enough. But her father was said to have been a Spanish grandee. Certainly she put on great airs, and had always treated the Sergeant as if he were the Captain's servant. But there was no Sikh who could be trusted to make the trip, so Grigley set out.

It was only a short walk down the gentle southern slope to the village. The houses, of typical construction, rose above him as he advanced—mere shadows having the form of birds'-nests on stilts. But Maria's, which stood apart from the others, was quite an American cottage.

Grigley was struck by its incongruity. Why had he never wondered more at this marvel? Where had the money come from which paid those carpenters who had arrived one day from Manila, erected it like a bit of magic with lumber of their own bringing, and departed without saying a word of themselves?

The *mestiza* threw a ready "*Buenol*" from an upper window in response to his knock. But she kept him waiting an unconscionable time. When she finally opened the door she was dressed in a starched American wrapper, and the black masses of her hair were carefully piled on top of her head according to the pictures in the latest arrived copy of her fashion-journal. Over her shoulders was thrown a cloak.

There is no question but what the impression she made at that moment was unfavorable. Here was a pretty kettle of fish! He had come at four o'clock in the morning

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to add her safety to his other burdens. And she had received him as if the call were not altogether unexpected. Without a word of explanation she had prepared herself as if for a journey.

So, she had contemplated the complete ruin of his friend—had planned to have him desert the Service and run away with her to some place where there would be a better opportunity of displaying those fine feathers which she received every now and then from a mail-order house in San Francisco! No wonder Simmerman had often prattled strangely about danger and dishonor, and had lately taken to drink. Grigley's heart grew bitter as he contemplated the lithe figure which the wedge of light from the open door outlined sharply before him.

"You've made a mistake, *señorita*," he began. "We don't sail this morning, after all."

"Deedn't you come for me?" she asked, taken aback, but drawling her words with careful deliberation. "If eet is only some talk, you can go back and tell ze Captain *zat* is what I care for heem!"

The beauty snapped her fingers and stamped her foot.

"The Captain," said Grigley, "is gone where you can't tell him anything."

"Gone? *El puerco!* And you have come to break ze news—to see Maria Gutez cry her eyes out. *Dios!* He was once all for *el matrimonio*. And now he casts me off like one rag."

SHE turned toward the depths of the room, betraying as she walked that indescribably graceful motion of the hips which comes from having had ancestors accustomed through generations to carrying burdens upon the head.

Grigley was astonished. In her humiliation she had suddenly become human. He seemed to be seeing her for the first time. He even felt called upon to apologize for the dead.

"Maybe," he said, "Jim would be for *matrimonio* yet if he had a chance."

"Then you do not know? He never tell you of his reech aunt who die and make him too fine for *la havbreed?* He never spik about one legacy he going to get?"

"Legacy?" repeated Grigley, mechanically. "I never heard of any legacy."

"What then you theenk go wrong?" continued the girl. "You no wonder why he get so suddenly tire of *la pobre* Maria?"

He did wonder. But probably the Captain had been romancing, and then grown weary of devotion inspired by fairy tales.

"Give me a chance to tell you what has happened. The Captain was shot last night. You must come to the post-house."

"Dead?"

A startled look passed across the *mestiza's* face. She dropped into a chair. But her manner expressed alarm rather than grief, and as he related the story her eyes began to glisten.

"You tie ze Moros in prison and you send for *el Caballero* Quentin?"

"Yes—but we must hurry. The hill-tribes will soon be raising the deuce."

In a sort of dream he led the way back to the post-house. He had known plenty of women—of a sort. But no woman had ever looked at him with this gaze of primitive admiration. Over his senses stole a slow realization of her femininity, of what it would mean to possess her. It was the first hint he had had that the cup of responsibility might hold its sweet as well as its bitter.

And yet on the whole he was vexed. It would add considerably to his death-agonies (should the Moros conquer) to have the *mestiza* where he would see her when she was cut to pieces.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAPTAIN'S GRIPSACKS

IT WAS still dark when they arrived at the post-house. Namiban had not returned, and—to mention a minor detail—nobody had found the riot-gun which the Captain always kept in his chamber. But the Sikhs had already placed his body on a canvas-covered litter and carried it to the general quarters. There the *mestiza* was forced to pass it—which she did without the flicker of an eyelash—on her way to the southwestern L where she was to stay.

Grigley, reminded by the absurd story of the legacy that there were thirty thousand pesos in the camp treasury, went to secure it. It was a trifling sum, but must be saved to protect a dead man's reputation. Simmerman had kept it in an old, battered gripsack under the head of his bed.

Grigley found the grip without any

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trouble, but was surprised to see another one beside it—a new one, wearing a remarkable air of luxury, somehow suggestive of the newness and luxury of the *mestiza's* cottage. And how heavy both of them were! He staggered beneath their weight as he carried them across to his quarters.

The light of the hurrying dawn had come. He opened the familiar grip by means of a rusty key that dangled from the handle by a leather thong. There was revealed a bulky collection of silver coins. He counted them, compared the total with the sum named in Simmerman's official report prepared only the day before, and found it correct to a peso. What, then, was in the newer bag?

The old key proved to be much too large for this, but he remembered having seen a string about the Captain's neck, such as soldiers and sailors wear to preserve keepsakes and good-luck charms. Beginning now to be oppressed with a vague foreboding, he went and gently searched the body lying there in state in the general quarters. The cord had not been disturbed; to its end, sure enough, was attached the wished-for key.

When the Sergeant had applied it to the unbattered grip he saw himself staring, not at more silver, but at a great quantity of paper pellets, twisted into shapes, resembling Christmas candies, or, more accurately, like the toy torpedoes which boys delight in on the Fourth of July. Underneath the papers was a quantity of pebbles, put there obviously as a make-weight. He took them out to make certain that nothing was hidden and returned them to their place. But over the bits of paper he hesitated. The more he fingered them the more his mind was filled with visions of fabulous things.

Already he guessed the truth. He wished that he had the moral courage to go down to the beach and fling these seeming "torpedoes" into the tide. But things had gone too far for him to escape so easily. That curiosity which is in the hearts of us all was in itself enough to overcome his prudence. His fingers began to untwist the bit of paper which they held.

Just then, as the sun burst suddenly over the shoulder of the volcano, there in his hand lay a perfect, glistening sphere, larger than a pea and as white as milk. He untwisted another bit, and another, and another, always with the same result, until there was on the floor beside him a great pool of fairy globules that shone like opalescent dewdrops.

DEWDROPS indeed! They were pearls, and as sinister as so many bullets backed by charges of black powder and aimed at his heart. The danger of possessing them under present conditions was something horrible. And yet, not having thrown them away unseen, he was doubly incapable of such a step now. The pretty things appealed to his rudimentary sense of beauty. The innumerable hardships which had been undergone for their sakes, from the daring of sharks by native divers to the daring of disgrace by a misguided soldier, had given them a value quite apart from their commercial one.

He himself remained, and was to remain, untainted by greed. But here was the foundation of Simmerman's talk about wealth; the price he received in exchange for an innocence of soul; the bait which had led to an outrageous and probably a systematic and long-continued robbery; the memento of a great crime. Was it to go for nothing?

And then—why deny it?—there flashed across Grigley's mind the picture of the pearls made into a huge necklace and strung about the dark but witching throat of Maria Gutez. More likely than not she had been the original motive for the theft, though the growing magnitude of the thing had at last made her a mere obstacle in the Captain's path. They seemed to belong to her now, if to any one.

Truly, if ever a man was cunningly driven into a position where the last atom of courage and capacity could be sucked out, it was Grigley. The specious logic of circumstances he could have resisted. This appeal to his emotions was too much. He decided to add the burden of the pearls to his other burdens.

So he replaced the things in their coverings and prepared to secrete them one by one in the nipa thatch. But he was to be denied the benefit of even this stratagem. There came a knock. Hastily refilling and locking the grip, he tossed it into a corner and went to the door. Namiban, the Sikh, had come back—alone. He had not been able to find Caballero Quentin, the *presidente.*

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CHAPTER VII

FERNANDO QUENTIN

AND yet the *presidente* was not far to seek. At that very moment he stood in the Captain's room, bending eagerly over the old Spanish bedstead. Grigley, driven by a growing uneasiness to make a tour of inspection, found him there half an hour later.

Prosperous and in power, Quentin might have showed himself more clearly for what he was. But lean, unhonored years had covered him with insignificance as with a mask. His gold-embroidered uniform had degenerated into a suit of dingy white duck. Straw slippers of Chinese make gave him a touch of tramp-like shabbiness.

Being of pure Castilian blood, he lacked the coarse swagger of the half-Indian Spaniard so common in more western lands. But the lips that held his cigarette were thick and sensual, and, half hidden in the lines of his sallow, flabby face, was a look of sleepless determination.

A quickly mustered *sang froid* concealed the fellow's embarrassment, but nothing could conceal the fact that in his fist he clutched a just-too-ample bit of straw, of the sort which had been used to stuff the Captain's under bedtick. He knew, then, that something of value might be expected to be found about the post-house. So much was a moral certainty.

The trouble with the Sergeant was that he had come too recently from a country where nobody acts upon moral certainties, and where everything, especially villainy, has to be proven in due legal form. Then, too, he made the mistake of thinking Quentin innocuous. Not liking him, he yet needed him. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought.

Quentin brazenly dropped the straw without attempting to account for it, and responded in rather cultivated English to the Sergeant's inquiring glance.

"I met your house-boy coming up. He told me about the murder. Tiassi must have turned *juramentado*. Have you killed him yet?"

Grigley shook his head. "*Juramentado*" was a word that had already flitted more than once across his mind. It signified a Mohammedan fanatic, who, having shaved off his eyebrows and cast precaution to the winds, has started out to win Paradise by slaughtering as many Christians as possible. The Sergeant did not believe that Tiassi had thus run amuck, and Quentin's suggestion somehow tended to strengthen his unbelief.

"Come to my quarters," snapped the Sergeant. "I've got a scheme I want to talk over."

Quentin followed without demur across the compound. Grigley rummaged in a cupboard, produced two glasses and a bottle of wine—his share of some forgotten loot—and faced the other across the equalizing table of hospitality.

"The scheme is this," he began, in a tone more befitting the *presidente's* rank. "The natives will come to cut our throats before another night is over. We've got to do something to stop them."

THE *presidente* stirred uneasily in his chair. He had not looked to be thus summoned to a council of war by a boyish *telegrafista*. And he longed, with a longing born of much thwarting in the past, for an opportunity to hurry back to his devices of the present.

"If the natives had been going to war," he responded, "they'd have done it before sunrise."

"So they would if they'd planned this shooting themselves. Their holding off so makes me think they haven't heard of it."

Quentin, without raising his head, shot a snake-like glance across the table. But there was nothing in the Sergeant's eyes to indicate anything more than a vague, unfocused anxiety.

"If I were you," said the Spaniard smoothly, "I'd go down to the village and collect a company of *amigos*. Every native isn't a Moro, remember. I'll stay here and look after things while you are gone."

"What could I do with a handful of *amigos?*" demanded the Sergeant. "The hills are swarming with bolomen. It'll take something more than *amigos* to keep my head fast to my neck—or yours, either, for that matter."

Quentin turned pale. This was all too true—if he did not get away while daylight lasted. For he had not been guilty of any treachery that would save him from the hillmen.

"Go down to the beach, then, and see if you can't get a boat to take us over to

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Jolo," he advised, moistening his throat with the wine.

"It's too late, even if I wanted to desert the post. But can't you get me half a dozen runners, *Caballero?*"

"*Seguramente.* But what do you want with runners?"

"I want to send for all the datos on the island, and have them here for a sort of friendly conference."

"Summon forty thousand devils!"

The *presidente* jumped excitedly to his feet.

"They'll be here, *muy pronto*, without summoning. Didn't you just say they were only waiting for dark to cut us to ribbons?"

"Exactly—if they come themselves. But if I invite them they'll be guests. A Mohammedan won't violate hospitality. That's the one decent thing about him. And maybe they'll agree to call it quits."

"*Madre de Dios!*"

The Spaniard settled back into his seat.

"I don't know but what you're right," he went on. "It's taking a terrible chance—but we'll need to do something if we stay here."

"All right then. There's always a lot of ex-Government employees hanging around your house in the village. Go and send them out with a message from me. We can have the conference here to-morrow morning, and trust luck to the mere invitation keeping them off to-night."

"I have many enemies," said the Spaniard, shamelessly. "I don't fancy the idea of going back to the village at a time like this."

Was he thinking of the treasure which he supposed was in the Captain's room? Or of the native *barangayan* he had hidden in a cove a little north of the frequented part of the beach, and of the excellent chance he had of getting away with the booty long before the native chieftains could be heard from? Grigley had no clue at that period of their acquaintance, and only sniffed contemptuously.

"If you're afraid," he said, "write me an order that these fellows can understand, and I'll send it down by Namiban. And then you can barricade yourself in if you want to. I'm going to give you the Captain's room."

Quentin was so elated by this suggestion that he could not repress a smile as he turned to write the order. Grigley smiled, too—but with his back turned and his eyes on the new gripsack. He believed that he held all the trumps and was taking the trick easily. Or, to change the figure, he could not perceive that the serpent had fangs. The time had not yet come when he and Quentin were to fight each other for life and for more than life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AGENT

NAMIBAN having been sent on his errand, Grigley lighted a pipe and prepared to take a few moments' rest. But rest was not for him. He was soon interrupted by a loud and authoritative tap on the window-pane. Going to investigate, he discovered a small, sallow-faced individual, whose blue and watery eyes looked out timidly enough from behind a frown of official pomp and severity half hidden by a helmet of uncompromising pith.

"A white man!" exclaimed the Sergeant. "Where the deuce did *you* come from?"

"I am the agent of the Boston Philanthropical and Anthropological Society," was the answer. Grigley stared.

The incident was preposterous. Here, in the midst of a savage turmoil that promised death and torture, stood one of those living embodiments of convention who carry yardsticks, ledgers and the Ten Commandments into the uttermost parts of the earth, count and measure the deeds of desperate men, and write damaging reports to the newspapers. He had heard a great deal about these pioneers of enlightenment since coming to the Philippines, and though he reached down, seized the present specimen by the coat-collar and lifted it bodily into the room, he would have preferred pitching it head first into the *cogon*-grass.

"You should keep sentries posted outside the walls," complained the agent as he straightened his orthodox tourist's clothes. "Some poor native might wander in, thinking the place free, and thus come under your merciless military discipline."

Grigley was beginning to perceive that he was the puppet of ironic gods.

"Where have you been?" he asked, with a sigh of resignation. "Don't you know what's happened?"

"I've been taking photographs of domestic

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life on the other side of the mountain. Most interesting! The Moros lead a very charming existence where they have not been corrupted by the army."

"I've heard that Moros are very easy with madmen. But down here they won't know you're crazy. You'd better skip over to the beach and see if you can't bribe somebody to take you off. It's better to drown than to have your skin peeled."

But the agent was not to be gotten rid of.

"I know all about the death of Captain Simmerman," he said. "Before coming to you I made a tour of inspection. I got in and out through the kitchen window, and had a talk with one of the prisoners you have so cruelly confined in the little building in the middle of the yard."

"When did you learn Moro, agent? I've always understood that you chaps never speak any of the lingos that could help you find out what's really going on."

"Ah, but the prisoner did not speak the native dialect of the region. He used a sort of English, and told me that he had been cast in by mistake with a number of men of a different religious faith who were preparing to kill him as soon as they could get rid of certain thongs which had been applied to their limbs in a manner that rendered fighting difficult."

"English?" repeated Grigley, picking up his riot-gun. "By Jove! There *was* a Maccabebe in that gang—a half-caste. I forgot all about him."

FROM the gun-shed groans and imprecations were arising like smoke from a half extinguished fire. Grigley, without stopping to consider the agent's humane sensibilities, unlocked the door and exposed the interior to the morning sunlight. There was revealed a wriggling pyramid of khakied humanity beneath which the Maccabebe, his enemies having tired of his company, was being smothered. It took the direct threat of the shortened Winchester to separate the mass.

"How long have these poor creatures been here?" demanded the agent when the victim had been rescued. "They must be in pain."

"Murder," observed the Sergeant, "is a painful business to get mixed up in. But you can give them some rice and water if you want to, and loosen their arms a bit. But don't monkey with the leg-straps. The house-boy 'll help you. He's probably asleep in the kitchen."

The agent set about his task while the Sergeant turned his attention to the Maccabebe.

"Now, sir, how did you get into this?"

"Much against will—understand? Moro want to mutiny. I get throat cut if I say no. But I one ceevilized *hombre—amigo*—friend—understand?"

"Can you handle a gun as well as you handle your tongue?"

"I in one raid of Smith at Samar," said the little brown one.

"Then you've seen some good, scientific war. Suppose I give you a rifle and a nice suit of duck; do you think you could act as my orderly?"

"You can trust *amigo*," said the Maccabebe, his eyes glistening at the promise of finery.

So an orderly he was made, outfitted in one of Grigley's best suits. It was a risky piece of business, arming the fellow. But Grigley was in desperate need of a bodyguard and wanted to keep the Sikhs fresh for picket-duty. Looking back upon the incident, it is easy to say he acted like a fool.

But the Maccabebes had won a great reputation from their fidelity to the American cause in the North. How was he to know that there was one form of temptation which they could not resist? The orderly was a success to look at anyway as he stood, dapper and at attention, behind the Sergeant's chair when the agent reappeared.

"I have been sickened by the sights of horror I have been forced to witness," announced that worthy, his face fairly green with a pasty sort of sweat. "I am going away to report of conditions at this station."

"No you're not," snapped the Sergeant. "You're under martial law, and I order you to stay here. Give me your word that you won't try to pass beyond the walls without permission."

"I—I can not."

"Orderly, take this man, tie him up, and throw him into the gun-shed with the other prisoners."

The agent shrank back from the touch of the eager Maccabebe, gulped, and allowed it to be understood that he had given his parole. But as he stood there, frightened and inarticulate, it could easily be seen that he was already composing a report to startle the world.

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"Take him to the Captain's room," directed the Sergeant. "And fix him up a cot there. The Spaniard will want the big bed. And if you can find any, give him some jam. It's too bad that we haven't got a nursing-bottle."

BUT though Grigley jested, he was growing quite alarmed by the increasing maze of his responsibilities. Gladly would he have abandoned the post-house. But the number of things which forbade it were continually multiplying. First there was the army instinct, which makes it as difficult for a soldier to give up a post as it is for a sailor to give up a ship. Then there was the garrison. Finally, to say nothing about the girl or the house-boy—the latter now a cipher, but of whom so much more anon—there were the pearls.

It made him uneasy to leave them a moment in the room unguarded. Yet he could not stay there and watch like a mother over a baby. So, unlocking the gripsack, he took the baby to his breast. That is to say, he removed the jewels from their papers, and, while the orderly was out, put them into a large handkerchief, which he knotted into a sort of bag. This he suspended from a string about his neck, trusting to his coat to hide the bulge. It was an uncomfortable and perilous expedient, and would necessitate the wearing of the coat through the heat of the coming day. But it had to be borne. When one steps out from behind the shelter of routine, one never knows to what lengths one will have to go.

CHAPTER IX

FIRE

AS THE day wore on, the sun, at first bright and scorching, encountered an ever increasing army of thunderheads piling up from the sea. The rainy season, then just beginning, promised soon to make good the threat of the previous evening in a heavy, tropical downpour. The coming night was likely to be dark.

This was the point which impressed Grigley, as, having gazed for some time at the foreboding clouds, he turned from the window to examine the great pile of ammunition-boxes which made a storeroom of one angle of his L.

The ammunition, at least, was satisfactory. It had not been tampered with and was in sufficient abundance to last a siege. If only the post-house had suggested siege-enduring, instead of being that flimsy thing it was!

While Grigley, stooping over the boxes, pondered these things, there came a cry at the door more startling than the alarm of war itself. It was the voice of the house-boy, shouting:

"For Heaven's sake, Sergeant, come quick! De place is on fire!"

Fire in a nipa shack is not a misfortune, it is a calamity. Add a store of explosives, and the calamity is likely to become a cataclysm. Grigley rushed out into the compound with the sudden conviction that all was over. But the sight which met his eyes was not only terrible, but wildly beautiful. From the sea a thunderhead had sprung like a vast bird with wings of black. And against this background there blossomed an ever-growing flower of red. The thatch just above the windows of the *mestiza's* room was ablaze.

The girl herself stood at her window, preparing, it seemed, to make the easy jump which would take her to the ground; though why she had chosen a window looking in upon the courtyard rather than one which would have landed her free of immediate danger outside, the Sergeant could not for the moment understand.

The *presidente* occupied the middle of the open space in a pose of helpless horror. Yet a gleam of unquenchable satisfaction shone in his eyes, and when Grigley approached he began to glide to one side, as if executing a premeditated flank movement.

Grigley, with the pearls on his person, had no need to guard his bedroom. But he was growing wise, and knew better than to make his lack of anxiety public. So, catching Quentin by the arm, he exclaimed:

"The whole shack will go! We must be getting out of the way. There's a lot of ball cartridge. Don't get near it."

"But the rain will be here in a few minutes," gasped the Spaniard, struggling in the outwardly so friendly grip which held him like a vise of steel.

AND then the attention of both men was drawn to the *mestiza*. Overhearing Grigley's remark about the ammunition, she had caught hold of one of the bamboo rafters and, instead of saving

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herself, began madly tearing away handful after handful of the burning straw. Had the fire been in the overhang, she might have succeeded in arresting its progress. But the center of the ignited area was in the top of the roof fully a foot beyond her reach, and she was much impeded by the blind. Moreover, there was a wind from the sea that gently urged the flames in the direction of the explosives. Evidently she was burning her hands to no purpose. And any instant her flimsy clothing might catch.

"Jump!" shouted Grigley, horrified. "It's no use. We've got to release the prisoners and abandon post."

The words had hardly left his lips when a sudden roar filled the air, almost as if the ammunition itself, anticipating the approach of the flames, had gone off spontaneously. It was the pent-up rain, bursting the clouds that held it and coming down in a nearly solid sheet of water.

For a single instant the blazing thatch struggled with its new assailant. Then all went black, and a darkness like that of night descended. Those in the compound gasped for breath, and were all but drowned in the smothering fury of the fall.

An instant later there shone through the black cloudburst a zigzag of lightning that tore forward to the accompaniment of a series of satanic discords. It revealed the *mestiza* tottering upon the sill. The clouds seemed to empty, like great sponges squeezed by a giant's hand. Grigley, half stunned and blinded, staggered towards the window and caught the girl as she fell.

Carrying her, limp and senseless, he returned to the spot where he had left the Spaniard. But Quentin was no longer there. As the downpour continued, cries of fright came from the prisoners in the gun-shed. But for several minutes the Sergeant stood still, holding Maria Gutez to his breast. He had been touched by her heroism in a way that he had never been touched before.

The shower tapered off abruptly. Through the diminished uproar came a boyish voice:

"Dis is a riot-gun, see? Stand still or yeh'll feel it in yer gizzard."

It was the house-boy once more.

Burdened as he was, Grigley hurried towards his quarters, for it was thence that the voice proceeded. There he found the boy accurately aiming a rifle, and Quentin with hands thrust up above his head.

"That boy is too *arrogante!*" muttered Quentin when the Mick had been sent to the *cocina* for the medical kit. "I was only trying to get under cover, and he meets me with one of your short Winchesters."

BUT the Sergeant, placing the girl on his couch, refused to respond, waiting in silence until the Mick returned, and then setting seriously about the task of doctor. Once or twice as the dressing of the burns progressed, the *mestiza* opened her eyes and seemed to drink in her protector's face with her long and solemn glances. But he worked on like a professional, with set jaw and steady fingers.

"The *señorita* should be more careful when she is curling her hair," the Spaniard finally ventured. "She should not spill oil on the table and not expect it to blaze up when she drops a match."

"It is a lie!"

Maria sat suddenly upright.

"I was by my window. I had lowered ze shutters. Would I leave myself where I could be spied upon by heem?"

She pointed a scornful finger.

"But I could see out through the slats —*sí. El Caballero* was in ze compound, smoking. He throw hees cigareete—so." She illustrated her words with a gesture.

Without offering any public decision as to the merits of this controversy, Grigley assisted the girl to her own quarters and sent the Spaniard to his. But he knew well enough what had happened. The serpent—he saw it at last—was not only vicious but enterprising. If he could only have gone one step farther and seen that he was venomous!

But he couldn't—there, with the girl almost before his eyes—he couldn't see how the Spaniard could get him at a disadvantage. The gods, wishing to lose nothing of the burst of furious action which was to end the drama, kept him blind.

CHAPTER X

A CONFERENCE OF PRINCES

THE rest of the day passed quietly. Night brought only silence. It was clear, and the moon covered the world with a fairy-like glimmer. Nothing happened. Early the next forenoon tall, warlike figures

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attended by large retinues of beggars began to appear. The native chieftains were coming for the conference.

Grigley had spent the early hours in the *cocina*, his eyes resting thoughtfully upon the wild boar's carcass which hung from one of the meat-hooks, his tongue keeping up a desultory conversation with the house-boy.

This boy, of a type common enough in the South Seas, but little likely to have been encountered by Western eyes, deserves a word of description. Known only as Manila Mick, he had been brought down from Luzon way by the Captain himself. Slant-eyed, pug-nosed, freckled-faced, and not more than twelve or thirteen years of age, he had the tremendous precocity caused by low latitudes and the preposterous crossing of strains. The Mick spoke no proper language, but was master of every dialect that flourishes under a perpendicular sun.

Sent now by the Sergeant to act as *major domo*, he greeted the datos with a pomp that was Irish, a stolidity that was Chinese, a languor that was Malay, and an accent that had been picked up from the Yankees —ushering the arrivals one by one past the silent object that made a chapel of general quarters, and assisting them to their places in a solemn half-circle that was forming in the Sergeant's room. The retinues he stationed outside the walls, permitting them, however, to make the most of the shade of a bit of tent-cloth stretched above the low, broad platform of the entrance way.

When the half-circle was complete, with some twenty princes of blood squatting on the floor and maintaining the silence of Indian braves, he served them ceremoniously with food and drink. The conference was ready to begin.

Grigley, who had emulated his guests in their acceptance of the floor as a substitute for chairs, slowly rose to his feet. Ostentatiously he laid aside his Winchester, unbuckled his cartridge-belt, and exhibited his empty pistol-holsters.

"You needn't worry about any treachery," he announced through the Mick. "You have *eaten* with me. I am going to treat you like my friends."

It was his first attempt at diplomacy, and his words sounded marvelously mouth-filling in his ears. But the datos only bowed stiffly and grunted among themselves. Their spokesman—a white-haired chief, stooped with age, yet as agile as a monkey—shifted himself forward on his haunches and replied at great length. Of a surety they were friends. Had they not accepted hospitality? But they would not insult the Governor's trust by laying aside their arms.

GOVERNOR! The Sergeant's heart swelled at the word. It was his first taste of sovereignty. What matter if his fellow sovereigns did continue to glitter like cutlery shops? He had a plan which would, he hoped, not only keep them docile, but bring them to their knees.

"I called you here to make a treaty," he informed them when the chief had finished. "You must catch Tiassi and bring him to me to be punished for murdering the American Captain. And you must swear to remain my allies. If you don't—well, you all know what happened under General Smith at Samar after the massacre of Belangiga. That's what will happen here."

There was the least perceptible movement among the guests, as if a cold wind had passed over their heads. They could not feign ignorance of Smith's Raid. It is as firmly fixed in Philippine tradition as the Deluge in the history of the Jews. Had its lesson been as well remembered by the whites, savages would not be slaughtering American soldiers in Sulu, as they are in this very year of our Lord.

There ensued a long pause. Then the old dato arose.

"You talk of things in the far North," he began in his own tongue; "of things that have come to us only like the faint beatings of war-drums across the water. There were very many *Americanos* at Samar, and their enemies were only the little people of the North. How are such things to happen here, where you are alone and we are as the sands of the seashore?"

As Grigley listened to the translation of this harangue his fingers toyed unconsciously with the telegraph instrument, inadvertently releasing the armature. The room filled with the clamor of the sounder. Headquarters was calling him. But he stuck a cut-off plug into the switch-board, severing the electric connection. The courage of a man utterly alone welled up in his breast.

"You ask how these things can happen," he cried. "The telegraph has answered you.

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Didn't you hear it? It said that within three days a gunboat will come with troops. The Captain will be avenged.

"You'll be slaughtered, men, women and children. There won't be even a baby left to tell the tale. And no *Americanos* will be killed to help you along to Paradise. Do you get that?"

"It will be a brave war," jabbered the old dato, unmoved. "Let it come. Men can not die better than in fight. Already we begin to smell the perfumes of the lovely ones in Paradise."

"Paradise?" shouted the Sergeant, battling desperately against the rising tide of defiance. "You'll never see Paradise. Don't you understand? There has been a change in the ruler of the Americans. There will be no more talk of mercy and kindness. Big guns shoot far. You won't get near enough to see what hurts you. And every Moro who dies will be buried in the same grave with a pig."

IT WAS his trump card, the fructification of an idea which had first come to him in conversation with the Mick, who assured him that every Mohammedan who touched the unclean carcass of the detested animal and died before purification was believed to go to hell, no matter what merit he had previously acquired by killing Christians. Had he hurled dynamite amongst the datos he could not have caused a greater commotion. A cry of rage and terror came from their throats. They sprang up as if they would tear the Sergeant to pieces before his threat could be carried out.

"Dogs!" he cried, beating them off with his ironwood stick. "Haven't you eaten my salt?"

Reminded by the ready Mick of the sacred bonds which made them guests, the chiefs one by one sank back, crumpled, forlorn and gibbering. They had but one fear, and that—into which was concentrated all the terror of the myriad scattered fears of ordinary men—hung over their heads like a huge stone about to fall. After a time the spokesman, cringing and abject, asked to be permitted to know what the Governor's servants could do to avert a calamity so awful.

"I've already told you," responded Grigley. "Deliver up the man who shot the Captain. I'm going to bury the first pig with him. If he's here on time I'll let the others off."

There ensued a long, muttered conference. Grigley resumed his seat. Outside the window the landscape was peacefully steaming in the strong heat of noon. A tropical bird on a near-by tree patiently plumed its gorgeous reds and greens and gave occasionally a harsh, metallic squawk.

Within the room the conference was lasting an unconscionable time. Grigley had hoped to crush these Princes with swift and terrible threats. But they were old and crafty. If they decided on war, he and all there were with him would be slaughtered before another morning broke. But here was the old chief rising to speak again, and his first words showed that the issue wasn't going to be so simple.

"You have given us a wise talk, Governor, and if the slave you seek were within our power he would be yours before a man could count the miserable number of his remaining days."

"I'll give you just till sundown to catch Tiassi and bring him here," interrupted the Sergeant, as if he had a whole brigade at his back. "Then I'll hang him to-morrow at sunrise."

To his surprise these terms were immediately accepted. The datos moved as if to go. Grigley, puzzled, stayed them with an uplifted hand.

"Not quite so fast. My gunboats have not yet arrived. You'll have to leave somebody in my hands to bury the pig with in case I don't get Tiassi."

"That is no more than fair. Let the eldest of us remain."

The spokesman, referring to himself grandly in the third person, seemed to consider the post of hostage one to be snapped up. Without a murmur he suffered himself to be put in charge of the orderly, who all this time had been standing importantly, like a marble-and-bronze-colored bit of statuary, beside the exit. Grigley studied the datos carefully, face by face, as they departed, trying in vain to read the secret of their hearts.

"Either they mean it honestly," he confided to the Mick when the last had gone, "or else they don't believe in their own superstitions and would just as soon be buried with pork as not."

"Dey b'lieve, all right," responded the boy. "But yeh can't ever tell about a

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Moro. Almost always he's got something up his sleeve."

CHAPTER XI

A LESSON

AND yet things seemed to be going well. Grigley was conscious of having performed a great stroke of diplomacy. If only, now, time be given him to carry it out! The persistent call of the telegraph, inadvertently discovered during the conference, warned him that the friendly headquarters operator was getting worried. Something more than dogged silence would be necessary to keep Authority's hands off much longer.

So, having sent the orderly to watch the hostage in one of the empty barracks, and leaving the Mick free to watch the orderly, he removed the cut-off plug and once more opened communications. The sigh of relief that came from the other operator could almost be heard over the wire.

"I was beginning to get cold feet—to think that something might have happened after all," he ticked. "Have you got over your jag?"

Grigley indulged in a Morse-code peal of laughter at his own expense. And then he delivered his mountainous lie:

"Anyway, it was only a jag, and there's nothing left of it but the headache."

"Thank goodness!" responded the other. "The Colonel just sent in for your report, and I had to fake one. I told him all was well."

"I'll O. K. it," said Grigley. "Good-by."

A bit of nipa straw had fluttered down on his coat sleeve during the colloquy, and it really disturbed him more than his audacious defiance of the Government.

Yet surely it was a trifle—that bit of straw. A nipa thatch, being much like a haymow, affords a home for rats, and by reason of the rats, a favorite hunting-ground for snakes. It is nothing for it to rain straw by the handful when some hapless rat is forced by a reptilian opponent into the ancient game of life against luncheon.

And yet the Sergeant, with the perversity of mere instinct, secured his rifle, lay down on his back in the middle of the floor, and exhausted much time and attention in trying to penetrate the interior recesses of the haymow. Once or twice he fancied that he saw two bright globes about the size of marbles that intermittently met his gaze—globes that came and went without seeming to move. But there was not the slightest rustle, and after a while he yielded to reason, which told him that there could not possibly be anybody in the thatch and that he ought to give his mind to more important matters.

FOR one thing there was the agent. Doubtless, the agent's word, once given, could be trusted. He must have a conscience and scruples that could be depended on. Could a man without a conscience go risking his life trying to promote silly and impracticable reforms in the tropics? But the more Grigley thought about it the less he felt satisfied that he really had the fellow's word, or had firmly hooked upon that conscience in the matter of the parole. It was a mere tacit consent that had been exacted from the Bostonian. Who knew but what, by some sophistry, some worship of the letter rather than the spirit of truth, he might not consider himself free to escape?

Grigley determined to set this matter at rest. With a deliberately casual air he sauntered across the sweltering compound to the Captain's room.

Why did he not take his riot-gun? That is what I ask myself. He had carried it about on the most trivial occasions. And the answer seems to be that he was merely human, after all, and subject to strange oversights like the rest of us. That is the only explanation—the only one he himself has to offer after all the years he has had to think it over.

In the Captain's room a lazy, unwatchful peace seemed to reign. Quentin lay on the huge Spanish bed, breathing heavily and with characteristic indifference to the form which had there so lately lain. On the cot prepared for the agent was also a recumbent figure. Grigley sighed in relief. He had feared he would arrive too late.

A board creaked beneath his feet as he started toward the cot.

"*Entre!*" came a sleepy voice from the bed. The Spaniard opened his eyes. "Ah, *señor*. Is it you?"

Grigley glanced about the room without immediately replying. There was a shameful litter on the floor. The walls and the thatch looked as if they had gone through a

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battle. Bits of the building material had been pulled out here and there and not too successfully restored to place.

"You made a thorough job of it, Quentin," he said at last, unable to repress a smile.

"Yes," was the insolently candid answer.

Now was the moment when he should have had his gun and used it quick as a flash. Detected thieves do not adopt that tone without a reason. But Grigley seems to have been fairly hypnotized by Quentin. The mere fact that the fellow was miserable and dirty does not seem sufficient to account for the Sergeant's gentleness and forbearance in dealing with him.

I think the feeling of scornful pity at first conceived gradually changed to one of sympathy which only something approaching tragedy and outrage could dislodge. Grigley had long been living in a Malay country, and that had taught him to regard every white man as worthy of some consideration. To have shot even a Spaniard like a dog at the first provocation would have been acting too much in violation of this intangible tie. Even if he had had his gun there is small likelihood that he would have used it. Speculations, however, are useless. He didn't even have his stick.

Quentin went on:

"I made sure the pearls weren't here before I began to look farther."

HE RAISED himself up in bed as he spoke, but without removing his arms from beneath the blanket. It was a surprising thing, the way he kept his arms covered, especially considering the heat of the afternoon. But Fate, anxious to teach a terrible lesson, permitted Grigley not to see it.

"We may as well understand each other about those pearls," continued the Spaniard. "Captain Simmerman and I went into partnership. Without my help he couldn't have done a thing. I committed some nasty crimes to help him. Then he got me drunk and gambled everything away from me. Am I to go shabby to the end of my days on that account? I tell you, I won't! There is enough to make us both rich. Let's come to terms. If we don't, I give you fair warning that I'm prepared to commit another nasty crime to get my rights."

Grigley, with the serene foolhardiness of the man of destiny, went over to the big bed and sat down on its edge, seemingly impressed by what Quentin had said. He looked the half-reclining figure thoughtfully over.

"And if I don't divide, what do you propose to do?" he finally asked.

After all, there was a certain prudence in this recklessness. Give yourself completely over into your enemy's hands and he has to be a pretty thorough rascal to take advantage of you.

Quentin must have felt this, for he showed his teeth as if he would have liked to provoke a quarrel. His tone became offensive.

"I saw them under your coat when you were mussing around that girl. You've got them with you this minute, and you haven't got a gun. You ought to be thankful that I'm willing to divide."

"What are you driving at?" demanded the Sergeant, though he knew he was in a trap.

"Just this. I've got you covered with my pistol here beneath the bedclothes. Make a false move, and I'll fire."

Grigley glanced towards the agent's cot and saw no sign of succor. A cry for help would only precipitate disaster.

"I guess the trick is yours," he remarked quietly. "What do you want me to do?"

"Have you got any concealed weapons?"

"No."

"Of course you'd say that. But even if you've got one, remember—I won't give you time to draw it. Take out the pearls and put them on the bed here. I'm an easy-going old Spaniard. I only ask for half."

The Sergeant produced the knotted handkerchief and emptied it. Once more beside him there shone a softly iridescent pool. Quentin reached out his left hand and separated the pool into two equal parts. But as his eyes feasted they hardened. After all, why should he divide? It would be not only better but safer to dispatch the Sergeant and own them all.

Grigley saw the change coming over his enemy's features and held himself alert, ready to play for that millionth chance, sure to come in the most desperate of situations.

BUT, as the Spaniard's eyes filled with the dark gleam of murder, his revolver suddenly clattered noisily but harmlessly to the floor from under the

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edge of the bedclothes. At the same time his body fell forward with his head buried in the treasure, as if avarice had stricken him dead.

For an instant the Sergeant felt a thrill of superstitious awe at this deliverance. Then he saw that his own ironwood stick had appeared on the bed beside him. It had been flung spear-wise through the window and had taken Quentin squarely in the back of the cranium.

"Oh, you Manila Mick!" murmured Grigley, aware of the identity of his rescuer even before looking up.

"Dat was a close shave yeh had den!" exclaimed the boy, crawling under the blind and landing with a bound in the middle of the floor.

Grigley nodded assent as he gathered the pearls together and put them back under his coat. The adventure had ended in extraordinary luck—and the great lesson had been driven home. Never again would he dally with Quentin. If he were worsted in the end it would be in spite of fully awakened caution.

CHAPTER XII

A TREATY

THE *presidente* did not appear to be seriously hurt, for he was already stirring. But why had the racket not awakened the agent?

"Mick," breathed the Sergeant, picking up the Spaniard's pistol and pointing across the room, "there's something mighty wrong over there. Go and see what it is."

The boy walked over to the cot with almost savage eagerness, took hold of the covers and jerked them back. No doubt he expected to see a person that he hated comfortably dead and done for. But what was revealed was not the agent, dead or alive, but a dummy made of an old uniform plentifully stuffed with newspapers.

"Some of your doings?" demanded Grigley of Quentin, as the latter, recovering slowly from the blow, began to take in the new situation.

"*Madre de Dios!* No!"

"But you must have seen him. You've been here all the time."

"No. I thought the Captain might have hidden his pearls in the outside of the wall. It didn't seem likely that a man could sleep with them very far off. But I got out through the window to make sure."

Grigley stuck his head through the opening. Sure enough the nipa was in places disturbed, showing that the Spaniard had not relied solely upon his theory or upon the untouched appearance of the weather-beaten surface in making his search.

"How did you know he hadn't climbed up on top of the thatch?"

"No, no," Quentin interrupted, "I knew he'd never put them where it would be so hard to get at them."

"Then you didn't see the agent making up his dummy?"

"No, he must have done it while I was outside. I'd never have let him go. I was anxious that you and I should settle our difficulties alone. And now that busybody will have the whole United States Government here inside of a week."

"If we could only catch him before he gets away," said Grigley half to himself.

"Let me go down to the beach," pleaded Quentin. "He can't have got away yet. I was dozing just before you came in. That's when he must have started."

With the Great Lesson still fresh in his mind, it was difficult for the Sergeant to admit the good sense of this suggestion. He did not want to dirty his hands with any agreement with the man who had so lately attempted assassination. And yet it was necessary to make every effort to capture the agent, and there was no one save Quentin to trust with the job.

Reluctantly he admitted to himself that he and the *presidente* had one thing in common—they were both afraid of Governmental interruption. They were allies in spite of themselves. It says much for Grigley's executive ability, the fact that he would have used the dirty tool for the work it was fitted for had not circumstances rendered such a thing unnecessary. The circumstances were these:

Before instituting a search of the beach it was necessary to search the post-house. This brought both Grigley and the Spaniard into the room with the telegraph instruments. Something amiss at once caught the Sergeant's eye. The key was open. Only a green hand could have done that. In the case of an expert operator the fingers would of themselves have shoved the little lever into place by sheer force of habit. Grigley rattled the key in vain. In vain he

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corrected the various adjustments and examined the switch-board and the batteries. There came no answering click from the sounder.

"The infernal fool has sent off a message and cut the wire," ground the Sergeant from between his teeth. "There's no use scouring around the beach. It would do no good if we caught him. It's too late."

"I might catch him, anyway, and take it out of his skin," suggested the Spaniard.

"No, go to your quarters. And if you leave them again without permission I'll have you shot."

Thus ended the treaty. Of course Quentin might escape, but it was not likely that he would try while the pearls remained in another's possession. And, directions having been given to the Sikhs, it did not seem probable that he would venture back across the compound.

CHAPTER XIII

A SURRENDER

MAKING the most of a bad situation, Grigley lighted his pipe and sat down, watching the smoke-puffs as the exhaust of the breeze snatched them one by one out through the wooden window-screen. Wistfully his thoughts followed them. The mountain, the village, the beach—he might yet hold them in the hollow of his hand if only he could stave off the official investigation.

As the afternoon wore on huge mountains of cloud began to obscure the western heavens. The night would be as impenetrable as felt. Would the datos deliver up Tiassi, or would they fight?

Towards evening, as if for answer, there came down from the mountain-slope the unmistakable sound of a drum, and soon afterwards the long, hollow cry of a conch-horn. This sounded like fight. But why had the attack not been delayed? Moros, unless in overwhelming numbers, are usually nocturnal in such affairs.

He went out in front of the station. A whining reed instrument now accompanied the drum, playing the burlesque of a dead-march. But it was difficult, because of the character of Moro music in general, to be certain that it was not meant for a festival.

As the sounds drew nearer the ear caught a murmur of voices. It was soon evident that a great company was marching from some point above the rice-paddies to the sea. It swept past the post-house at the distance of nearly an eighth of a mile, and seemed about to pass definitely to the beach, when it turned and made for the post-house platform.

"What ees it?" demanded the girl, who had crept tremblingly to Grigley's side.

"It looks like an army," he responded. "Has everybody got a gun?"

Everybody did have a gun, as the Mick now stepped forward to assure him—everybody, that is, save the girl and the *presidente*. As to the girl, the lack was soon remedied. But the *presidente* was permitted to crouch defenseless within the walls of his room. Something hard and stern had taken possession of the Sergeant. He meant to have no shots in his back, whatever else happened. The orderly, his hostage beside him, was stationed at the Sergeant's elbow, with instructions to take bloody justice if a hostile demonstration developed from any quarter.

AS THE procession came clearer into view it looked more and more like a mob dressed in tattered rainbows. Rags it wore, but not a *sarong* or a *camisa* lacked its gorgeous dye. Women as well as men were there, and all were singing, lifting their voices higher and higher with every step, until the volume of the chant was overpowering.

It soon became evident that this singing was undertaken with a purpose. The natives wanted to drown the crying of one in their midst. Suddenly the crying rose above the song in a long, gritty shriek. The front column parted, and three men in loin-cloths—men huge and muscular and almost as black as negroes—rushed forward, half dragging and half carrying a smaller man whose hands had been bound behind his back. Having hurled this hapless one almost at Grigley's feet, the escorts leaped back into the ranks.

"Good!" cried the Sergeant, giving the screaming and groveling Tiassi—for Tiassi it was—into the care of the Sikhs.

"You have kept faith with me and with your chiefs. Be here, all of you, promptly at sunrise. I don't like cutting throats, and shooting is too honorable. The man you have delivered must hang, and we need time to build a gallows. But with the

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beginning of the new day the body of the traitor shall lie in the grave—and the body of the pig shall lie there with him."

The Mick dutifully repeated the harangue sentence by sentence in the native lingo, and after each sentence there arose a dull murmur while the words passed from mouth to mouth. The crowd finally becoming silent, Grigley waved his hand. Instantly there was a movement of dispersion, and in a few minutes not a human being remained visible outside the post-house.

And almost at the same instant that the *cogon*-grass swallowed the last of the crowd, the troubled tropical twilight turned to night. It was as if the world had fallen into the hands of ghostly weavers who were making it a garment of black. And with it, in spite of the auspicious outcome of the deal with the natives, there fell over the little garrison an atmosphere of gloom. Sometimes in tropical warfare the weather is more important than regiments. That afternoon it had saved the post. Who could say what it would do that night?

CHAPTER XIV

THE ORDERLY

TIASSI, still bound, was thrown with the other prisoners into the gun-shed. Namiban and a companion Sikh were put on guard, and the others ordered to get what sleep they could. The Sergeant sought his quarters.

By this time the wind was rising. During the next few hours he was disturbed two or three times by the sense of a subtile stir which seemed to fill the place. He made tour after tour of inspection, but could catch nothing on the move. Finally, the wind failing utterly, there was a distinct rise in temperature—and profound quiet. He found his brain growing dull with an almost irresistible desire to sleep.

"Here," he said to the dutifully wakeful orderly; "take your Krag and pace a beat out in front of my windows. I'm going to bunk. Mind you shoot anything that stirs—anything, understand!"

The little fellow saluted pompously and took up his duty. Grigley went through his preparations for the night, undressing in full view from the wilderness, blowing out the light and moving the bed, just as he had done on the two preceding nights. The genius of the campaigner sent him to sleep within thirty seconds of touching the pillow.

For a while the silence was broken only by the regular pacing of the Maccabebe. But the Sergeant could no longer lie like a log and let the world go hang. Instead of its taking a rifle-shot and a pounding on the door to awaken him, a vague uneasiness, born of nothing, was sufficient.

He sat up in bed. The air was as still as the air of a tomb. On ordinary nights there was serenading by the sea, the sound of conch-horns, the beating of tom-toms, mournful love-chants—at worst the occasional crack of an unskilfully handled rifle. There had even been some signs of nocturnal life the night before. But now a spell seemed to have been put upon the island.

Grigley listened, but there came to his ears only the faint moan of the surf. He knew now what had awakened him. It was the sudden stopping of the pit-pat of the orderly's boots.

Reaching for his ironwood club and clad only in his pajamas, the Sergeant glided across the room. Holding the stick slantwise before his face, he slipped a leg over the window-sill and felt the cool, moist earth beneath his toes.

Everything was dim, but the deepest of the gloom was slowly dissolving in a faint, glowworm sort of mist, half phosphorescent vapor and half filtered moonshine. He had seen such nights before—blinding bridal nights more troublesome to the eye than Tophet itself—nights when the earth was hidden in the folds of an impalpable but opaque veil—nights of a beautiful but terrible and baffling luminosity.

The gaze had to linger long on any object to distinguish even its general outlines. But he succeeded finally in making out what appeared to be a shadow about three yards before him. He drew his other leg over the sill and, crouching low, his ironwood swinging to the right and left in a short arc, he crept stealthily forward. As he wished no twig to snap and betray his presence, he brushed the ground bare with a deft motion of his soles before trusting it with his weight. Yet he had not taken three short paces before the shadow separated into two parts—one that darted off into the invisible, and one that stood still.

"Is that you, orderly?" The Sergeant

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spoke in a clear, decisive voice that was yet little above a whisper.

"*S-sí, señor.*"

"Get inside."

The shadow obeyed, the Sergeant following at its heels.

"Light the lamp."

"Yes, sir."

"Now," said Grigley, when this command also had been carried out, "what does this mean? Who were you talking to?"

"Just *amigo*—one friend, Sergeant."

"A *pacifico*, fellow countryman, and all the rest of it I suppose?"

"*Sí, sí*—him *pacifico*."

"How then does it happen that he was a Moro?"

GRIGLEY had no idea of the tribe of the intruder, but thought it safe to stab at the truth. As he spoke he took a threatening step forward. The Maccabebe still carried a Krag. Grigley had only his club. Yet the better armed man cowered abjectly.

"Me lie—me talk with sentinel," he chattered.

"With the Captain's murderer—Tiassi?"

"Tiassi—yes." The orderly nodded excitedly several times.

"How did he get out of the shed?"

"He bribe Sikhs—tell them he know where many thousand peso and two bag of pearl."

"What was he saying to you?"

"He come tell me how he get out. I tell him go back—that only chance is to throw self on Sergeant's mercy and mercy of *la señorita*."

"If the Sikhs are the ones that let him out, he's got a great many more chances than I have. Your story won't hold water, orderly."

For a moment the Maccabebe stood unsteadily on his feet, apparently afraid to open his mouth.

"Me can no deceive your Honor," he stammered at length. "Tiassi was try to bribe me let him shoot you as he shoot Captain."

"What did he offer?"

"Rice and pesos if we succeed—all the joy of Paradise if we fail."

"Why, I thought you were a Christian?"

"He was try to make convert."

A likely time for a theological argument! The whole idea was preposterous. Poisoned by trying to imbibe more Americanisms than his nature could stand, the Maccabebe had learned the power of gold and had accepted a bribe. This much was evident. And now his wit was not equal to the occasion.

But why hadn't Tiassi taken the opportunity to commit the murder and have done with it?

The question being put to the orderly, he exclaimed: "He shoot—when you on *guard?* And he not really know it you?"

"Why didn't you shoot him, then, in the first place?" the Sergeant quizzed. "I told you to pot everything that stirred."

"I no could get gun down in time. Besides, it no good."

"What was the matter with your gun?"

"I forgot to put in him load."

"Let me see it."

The orderly's face fairly shriveled with consternation, as if the vital fluid had been suddenly pumped from beneath the skin. Grigley laid his ironwood on the table and took the Krag into his own hands. A glance at the chambers showed the full load in place.

Seeing himself caught, the Maccabebe cast hurried glances about in hopes of finding some mode of escape. But he had inadvertently backed fairly into a corner. It was to be a duel. With the cunning of desperation his fingers reached out and possessed themselves of the abandoned ironwood. Grigley, catching the movement just in time, clubbed the rifle and brought it squarely down. There was hardly a sound as that which had been threatening became a crumpled heap on the floor.

It was a gruesome necessity; but, somewhat to his own surprise, the Sergeant felt only a sense of relief—a positive pleasure in having given vent to his pent feelings. If only he could at that moment have disposed of Quentin in the same primitive fashion!

CHAPTER XV

THE MAN-HUNT

GRIGLEY dressed himself, blew out the light, and, resuming his stick, crept back to the spot where the two shadows had separated. Somewhere beyond that impenetrable white mist lurked the man he must catch—a man who, since he had evidently got some inkling of the

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existence of the treasure, was little likely to rest content with mere escape.

For a time the Sergeant stood motionless, waiting and listening. Then he slipped back through the house to the compound. A red glow met his gaze as soon as he opened the door. Overcome by sheer loneliness, the two Sikhs had built a fire in front of the shed. But the regular crunch of a pair of army boots told that discipline otherwise prevailed. Grigley advanced quietly. He was met by a quickly leveled firing-piece, and a whispered challenge.

"Salute, sir," the Sergeant whispered back. "Don't you see who it is?"

The piece came to present; the Sikh sighed in relief.

"Is everything going well?" demanded the Sergeant.

The sentinel nodded.

"Where is the other guard?"

The Sikh pointed to a recumbent figure just beyond the corner of the shed. The flickering firelight gave it the appearance of fantastic motion. Grigley went nearer. The figure was quite still. It had once been Namiban; now it was only a torso. Search failed to discover either its rifle or its head.

"You've been asleep, I suppose," ground out the Sergeant to the surviving Sikh. "Open the door and count your prisoners —if you've got any."

With teeth chattering, the Sikh obeyed. The Moros were revealed stretched in easy positions, asleep or feigning slumber. Grigley counted carefully. There was none but Tiassi missing.

"Was everything quiet during your watch, or were you so fast asleep that you don't know?" Grigley demanded after relocking the door.

The Sikh protested that he had not slept a wink.

"Then you left your post?"

There was a stammered affirmative.

"Woman come here—say something try get in window—I go see."

"Did you find anything?"

"No."

So he had come back. Namiban was then asleep, but everything had seemed right.

"You are quite certain that the woman wasn't a man by the name of Quentin?" asked the Sergeant.

"Not man," gibbered the Sikh, but in a voice that was barely audible.

"Turn out your pockets."

"But, sir——!"

"Turn them out!"

The order had to be obeyed. There fell to the ground a large gold coin. The Sikh dropped to his knees.

Yes, it was the *presidente* who had come. But he had really said that there was somebody prowling by the *señorita's* windows. And he had given the Sikh the coin as a present if he would go and investigate.

GRIGLEY saw that those who befriended him were children, and that there had been a pretty scheme launched when Tiassi was let out. Doubtless Quentin had relied upon his own knowledge of the treasure's whereabouts to enable him to get hold of it before the others during the moments of confusion expected to follow an assassination. As for the Sikh, the worst thing he could be condemned to was to continue his watch.

Grigley went—but it was not to look for the Spaniard. He knew without looking that that individual was snugly in his room, carefully keeping aloof. It was in the *cogon*-grass about the post-house that Fate's emissary, armed with Namiban's rifle, must be hiding. And there the Sergeant, having repossessed himself of his riot-gun, hunted him for the next full hour. Then he began to realize that a white man has no senses capable of competing with those of a Moro. The riot-gun might protect him, and maintain the *status quo*. But to gain any advantage he must use his wits.

So he went back to his room, boldly and noisily by the door. He relighted the lamp, closed all the slatted window-blinds save one, shoved the bed back to its proper corner, and made a great show of preparing for rest, though all that he removed was his coat. A flap of the bedclothes brought a return of darkness. But this time he did not get up and shove the bed to a safer spot. The old trick could not be turned now. It was time for a new one.

The Sergeant lay full on his back, breathing quietly and aware of no great perturbation. His Winchester lay beside him, the short barrel elevated by his knees, which he had hunched together at just the right angle beneath the covers. At will he could spatter

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the whole area of the window with buckshot.

Grigley expected to be able to see his would-be assassin's shadow the moment it should pass across the silvery square of the casement. But he had reckoned without taking into consideration the comparative weakness of the white man's vision. His eyes, strained by the continued effort to analyze nothingness, soon began to create shapes and shadows of their own. Vague outlines seemed to float about.

Once what appeared to be a head and a pair of shoulders all but obliterated the window square, and Grigley came near giving the alarm by a premature shot. It was only as he was about to press the trigger that the square cleared of its imagined obstruction. Obviously his plans would have to be modified. He could not hope to lie there and tell a real appearance from the creations of his optic nerves.

So Grigley resolved upon a desperate expedient. He would let the Moro take an actual shot, and then fire at the flash—if he still happened to be alive. There was a good gambling chance of the fellow's missing. He had been aided by the moon when he shot the Captain.

Gradually the Sergeant let his breathing grow louder. It ceased to be the silent intake and outlet of a watcher, but rose to long, slumberous sighs, followed by an excellent imitation of a snore. Pretending slumber was easy—in fact, dangerously easy. The constant suggestion invoked a genuine drowsiness which it became more and more difficult to fight off.

Just as this new and subtile enemy had for the second time caused his eyelids an involuntary flicker, something happened. Again a shadow had paused before the window. Whether it was real or imaginary was for a moment a matter of uncertainty. But there was nothing imaginary in the sudden crash of exploding powder which followed, nor in the bullet that nipped the Sergeant's ear before boring its way into the pillow.

Grigley's answering shot came with such celerity that the two reports all but blended. And as the echoes died away, cries and sounds of running feet were heard throughout the post-house. Muffled yells came from the gun-shed. The hornet's nest was stirred at last.

CHAPTER XVI

A DEFEAT

GRIGLEY was apprehensive of a general attack. He could no longer trust even the Sikhs. And he decided that it would be better to have a clear space before him rather than an insufficient barricade. So he unfastened the door and propped it open at its widest. Mick appeared, and, after seeing that the Sergeant was alive, devoted himself to waving back the startled Sikhs to their places. But there was no sign of mutiny. The one to be flung almost into his arms by the impetuosity of her entrance was the *mestiza*.

"*Gracias á Dios! Gracias á Dios!*" she cried, seeing him safe.

"Stand where you are for a second," said Grigley, barring her farther progress. "And you'd better shut your eyes while I light a lamp. There's something very unpleasant on the floor here."

"*Disagradable?* No! Ze dead body of your enemy—eet would be good to see."

"But this is only a poor devil of a Maccabebe I had to finish off earlier in the night."

"Thees Tiassi—he still alive? Then you must not make a light. He would keel you yet."

"I guess he's past killing anybody," Grigley explained, fumbling for matches after having thrown a blanket over what was left of the treacherous orderly. "Tiassi has fired his last shot. I did for him outside the window."

"Let me see!"

Impulsively she pushed past the Sergeant and leaped lightly through the window. Morning was yet to come, and her slender figure faded into the ghost-like gray, to disappear entirely as she stepped beyond the spot directly illuminated from the room.

"I have found heem!" came her voice. "Hand me your lamp."

Fascinated by her half-savage eagerness, Grigley complied. He watched her—a flaming spirit making its way slowly into a world turned suddenly black by contrast. But when the rays of the lamp which she held above her head fell upon the face of a figure that lay on its back in the edge of the *cogon*-grass, his heart gave a leap of consternation. Tiassi had been a man conspicuous for his heavy, bushy eyebrows.

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This creature, that had recoiled a dozen feet from unexpected death before falling, had scarcely any eyebrows at all.

"Come back, for Heaven's sake!" he called.

Something in his voice made her obey. But once in the room she stepped between him and the lamp.

"What ees it? Why do you want to put eet out?"

"I must have shot some mere prowler," he exclaimed. "That isn't Tiassi. Blow out the light, quick. He must be about somewhere—and the devil can shoot."

"Then the Sergeant is een great danger," murmured the girl, but without moving.

"Yes—and so are you. Will you let me blow out that lamp?"

"Wait! I have seen something which Sergeant Greegly wears about hees neck. Maybe eet is ze Captain's legacy. Let me take and keep. Then you be more safe."

"What! And make you the target for all the deviltry that is going on? Never!"

And yet it was joy which sprang up in Grigley's breast and vibrated in his voice. Here at last was some one whose hand was neither weak nor turned against him.

THE meaning of his voice was by no means lost. The light went out and two arms flung themselves about his neck, while a voice, low and passionate, exulted in his ear:

"Sergeant Greegly—he see at last zat he have ze love of Maria Gutez."

Yielding to a sudden and overpowering impulse, he sought for nearer proof. But here he found resistance.

"Ze legacy!" she panted, holding him off. "Trust me—and save yourself."

"I'm willing enough to trust you. But——"

He hesitated. After all, why not let her take the pearls? He was—as he discovered to his own surprise—eager, passionately eager, that they should nestle close to her person. No one need know. She could think that she was shielding him from danger, while he—still their reputed possessor—could in reality bear its brunt.

From what I have since learned of the girl I doubt if she could have been taken in by any such fond and transparent expedient, even if events themselves had not—as they so soon did—openly dare her to a course of action quite contrary to Grigley's plan.

"Give—give!" she cried.

But still he hesitated. He was figuring on a way to make sure of her thinking she was protecting him. He might call in the Mick and tell him in her presence to keep an eye on her—and warn the Mick afterward to say and do nothing.

But suddenly he found himself taken at a disadvantage. He could not strike; the woman was lithe and strong and was fighting determinedly for possession of the pearls. In the struggle the string broke which held the knotted handkerchief to his neck. Maria, triumphant, bounded away, leaped through the window, and was gone.

Defeated, the Sergeant did not follow her at once. It was such a relief to be rid of the pearls. It seemed to give his limbs a new freedom. He could breathe easier and fight better. There appeared to be no immediate danger of her announcing her possession of the treasure. Why should he not enjoy the respite that had been forced upon him? He had enough to do trying to figure why Quentin had not rushed out during those first few moments when everybody must have thought the post without a commander.

XVII

A VILLAIN'S RESOURCE

THUS the girl was alone on her way to the compound. As she was about to pass in through the entrance way a voice called to her softly in Spanish:

"Come around to my *puerta* as soon as you can. I'm a prisoner, and I've something to tell you."

She went to her room without a word, but a few moments afterward again made use of a window to reach the outside world. Quentin, who had spoken to her on the chance of it, was somewhat surprised and altogether delighted to hear a whispered "*¿Cómo puedo serviele?*" coming to his ears through the *cogon*-grass.

How could she serve him? Why, first of all by letting him help her in—which he did in quick, nervous silence.

The moon was setting, but it was still just possible to see. The Spaniard led the *mestiza* to a chair, and stood before her with the flattering mien of a *caballero*.

"It is strange," he began, "that a man

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like the Sergeant has no eye for a pretty woman like *la señorita!*"

"What did you want with me?" she asked.

"I wanted to speak about the Sergeant. He has forbidden me to leave this room. He was afraid I would interfere with his great plans. It is the same with Maria Gutez, I see. The little heart is touched, but the big *Americano* has no time for it. In the old days the *señoritas* did not pass over such things. But the point is this: do you know why he has no time? Do you know of the wealth left by the Captain?"

"I knew he had a legacy," murmured the girl, still in Spanish.

"Legacy? It is a treasure of pearls—beyond counting! And the Sergeant wears it now around his neck."

"What of that, *caballero*?"

"Ah, you have no courage for revenge! You let him slight you, and don't even wish to slip your pretty arms about his neck and cut the string that holds the bag of pearls? Look here," he went on, unmindful of Maria's smile, "you have been too lofty with the Sergeant, posing as *una Americana*, and all that. What have you been thinking of—marriage? Be sensible. Take him any way you can get him. And when you have the pearls I'll help you get away. You shall have half. There's a native *barangayan* waiting for us in a cove. Will you do your part?"

"No."

The single syllable burst of itself from the *mestiza's* lips.

"What would you have, then?" continued Quentin. "Is the half not enough? Very well. You shall have all. I will make you *La Señora Quentin.*"

"*Gracias, caballero!*" She rose from her chair, and sank nearly to the floor in a mocking curtsy of amazing grace. "*Gracias!* Eet is too much honor!"

THE Spaniard felt his blood tingle at the sight of her body's beautiful curves. But his anger stirred at the same time, and, taking a seat before her, he drawled insolently:

"So, the big Sergeant has ensnared the little half-breed so that she means to be faithful whether he thinks of her or not? There, there! Don't go feeling in your pretty bosom for the jeweled dagger which, of course, you carry for the protection of your virtue. If you're for the Sergeant, take away the pearls for his own sake. His life isn't worth a peso while he keeps them."

"Sergeant Greegley can protect himself from such vermin as are against him," said the *mestiza*, with a proud drawing up of her shoulder.

"Nonsense! I have only to let out the prisoners, shoot him during the row, and loot the corpse at my ease."

"You kept pretty close just now," she taunted.

"I was listening," he answered. "I heard two shots, and knew that he was on guard. But if neither wealth nor honor suits you, why not go in for happiness?"

"How could I?" she inquired with curiosity.

"Easily. Go back to him. He is young and made of flesh and blood. Don't forget that. Get him to run away with you. No; but listen to me. I only ask for my share of the pearls, and I'll help you take him where you like. There is room for three in the boat. You'll have enough for a splendid trip to Manila, or farther yet if you want to. Once we have the treasure we can make him do as we wish. He shall even marry you if you say so; I promise it on the honor of a Spaniard. What do you say?"

"I say you are——!"

She used the word of supreme insult, which only the language of Castile affords.

"*Demonio!*" he cried, leaping up and confronting her, eye to eye, and drawing a revolver. "Do you see what I have? This will do the rest of my talking. I don't see why I didn't take command of this post long ago."

"You didn't and can't because you are a coward," she stung him, as he made for the door.

"Can't? I'll have the pearls within five minutes, and escape alone in the boat. Your Sergeant will be carrion," boasted the Spaniard. "Fool! He's got them about his neck this minute."

"Has he?"

The girl laughed in a way that made Quentin turn. And then she thrust her hand into her bosom and brought forth a handkerchief in which had been wrapped things which clicked softly as she shook them tantalizingly in the Spaniard's face.

Quentin swore a terrible oath and sprang upon the woman as if he would tear her

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limb from limb. She caught the hand which sought her throat, but she had no parry ready for the fist which dealt her a blow on the temple. Quentin stooped over her prostrate form just long enough to snatch the laden handkerchief from her helpless fingers—that, and a serviceable army revolver which, with a sudden jerk to his nerves, he discovered where he had suggested a jeweled dagger might be. Then he started for the beach, thanking his stars that he had made his attack suddenly and without giving her inexperience time to draw the weapon.

GRIGLEY still sat by the window. The heavens grew black and then became tumbling masses of cloud illuminated at intervals by broad, silent sheets of lightning. Now and then there was a flash of the more vivid sort, succeeded by a crash of thunder. Soon the rain would be coming down again in stifling floods.

At last, in the momentary hush succeeding a particularly splitting crash, he thought he heard a groan. Going out cautiously, he sought the *mestiza's* room. The door was fastened on the inside, but gave way before his impetuous shoulder. The storm was increasing. Grigley shouted, but it was like shouting in the midst of a battery of artillery in full action. He could discern no living thing in the room by the sense of touch, and soon the lightning came to assure him that it was indeed empty.

At this a fierce rage took hold of him, driving him like a whirlwind toward the Spaniard's quarters. Here again admittance was denied. But he made short work of denial by beating the door to pieces with a frenzied gun-butt.

There is no denying the fact that jealousy, unreasoning and bitter, played its part in the Sergeant's fury. The theft of the pearls was for the moment seen in another light. Maybe she had gone to the Spaniard to divide the spoils. Even the groans he had heard did not prove that she had not done so. They merely tended to show that she had herself been traitorously dealt with.

But the sight of the *mestiza* lying prone on the floor, her temple livid and swollen and all life apparently quenched, brought him to his better senses. Jealousy, ashamed, fell back as from a blow, loosening his heart-strings and admitting a different feeling. Tenderly he picked up the girl and carried her to her own bed.

But at the first sign of her returning consciousness he was—quite illogically—stung anew by suspicion. Not even her narration of what had happened sufficed altogether to restore him. The girl expressed a desire for more air, and was ensconced in a chair by the window. But the spirit of restraint was upon both.

The rain began to descend in a steady roar.

"Look!" said the *mestiza* at length, pointing to the darkness. "Wait till ze flash come again."

He could not distinguish her words, but could not fail to comprehend her gesture. He looked. The thunder crashed like a mighty hammer against the anvil of the mountain, and, resounding, was lost in the sea. Ever and anon the powers of the air hurled it back. But for a moment it was all noise. The iron upon the anvil was cold. It emitted no sparks.

"There is nothing," said Grigley, in a loud voice.

But his instinct belied him. There was something—something close outside between them and the village, and it moved.

FROM the heavens came a harsh, bluish-tinted blaze, and into the retina was cut the picture of ten or twelve men, almost naked, marching like ghosts to the sea. Among them they carried an object by the aid of long bamboo poles—an object evidently of some detestable character, for all kept as far away from it as the length of the poles would permit.

As the picture faded, Grigley held his breath, wondering if he were awake. For there was something in this soundless procession moving through the general turmoil which made it seem creepy and unreal.

Slowly the procession receded into the distance until it finally reached the beach. There, by fits and snatches, they saw the marchers plunge in, and continue their mysterious labors until the hated burden was safely consigned to the outgoing tide.

"What is it?" asked the *mestiza*, in a voice made tremulous by the spectacle she had just witnessed.

"Wait!" responded Grigley.

He crossed the square to the *cocina*, gave one glance at a row of empty meat-hooks, and hurried back to her side.

"They have stolen the wild boar," he

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told her. "No wonder I heard queer noises about."

"And you have nothing to make them afraid? Nothing to bury Tiassi with, even if you find heem?"

"Nothing."

"What will happen?"

She leaned toward him and touched his arm.

"What will happen?" he repeated. "Heaven only knows."

CHAPTER XVIII

PEARLS, EYEBROWS AND PORK

IT WAS certainly a perilous situation. But at least—so he told himself—he was freed of Quentin and the care of the pearls.

"We have only ourselves to think of now," he assured the girl.

"Do you not theenk *el caballero* will come back?" she asked.

"Why should he come back? He's got what he wanted. You rid me of Simmerman's legacy more thoroughly than you intended to."

"What you theenk I was doing in his room?" she demanded.

"I don't know as I care to think about it. He played you some trick to get you there, I suppose."

"You have always despise *la pobre Maria*," sighed the *mestiza*. "You theenk of her as a foolish child—at best as one of the beautiful fireflies that hover over the rice-paddies at evening."

"No; but what *were* you doing there?"

"You don't want to lose the legacy, Sergeant Greegley? You would not willingly geeve it up?"

"No, I don't suppose I would—especially to that scoundrel of a Spaniard."

"Then let me tell you Maria was not such a fool as to take it with her. She had some necklaces of little snail-shells, and let heem take them. Here are the pearls—safe!"

She drew forth a well-worn chamois-skin "vanity bag," and revealed its glittering contents.

"You mean you worked a substitution on him?"

"*Sí*—he fight me for nothing," she laughed, holding up her head in pride of her exploit.

Grigley perceived that to rise to the level of this woman his soul would have to drink deep of that wild draft of life which circumstances were offering him. He perceived also that the Spaniard would soon discover the cheat and return.

Quentin was in fact at that very moment kneeling in the sands at the edge of a little cove by the sea, unfastening the bundle he had stolen. His mind was luxuriating in distant cities, laughing at the fate of the islanders, reveling in the fancied possession of honors, women, power.

It was some seconds before he could bring himself to realize that he was staring at worthless shells instead of at pearls. But when the truth finally became clear he sprang to his feet. In all that savage-infested island there was none so savage or so dangerous as he.

Grigley half saw it all in imagination. He knew what to expect.

"Have you a weapon?" he suddenly asked the girl.

"You geeve me one rifle," she responded.

"I mean something you can use at close range."

She shook her head. Grigley rushed back to his quarters and returned a few moments later with a spare revolver—the replica of the one she had lost.

"Does the Sergeant care—enough so that I use this if they come for me?" she asked, taking the weapon, but without troubling him with the story of its fellow.

"Yes. If anything happens and I can't save you, use it."

"*Bueno!*" she murmured. "The Sergeant need never fear. Maria Gutez will not fall alive into ze hands of Moros or into ze hands of *Caballero* Quentin."

GRIGLEY went back to his own quarters, where he was soon joined by the Mick.

"Say, Sergeant," volunteered the boy, "it's gettin' late. De sun'll be riz soon an' dere has got teh be a gallows built. We ought teh be gettin' busy."

"We haven't anybody to hang, Mick. Tiassi has escaped."

"Why, I t'ought yeh shot him just a w'ile ago?"

"So did I. But it turned out to be somebody else—a stranger."

"W'at makes yeh t'ink it ain't Tiassi?" the boy called back, when he had gone out to examine that which the *mestiza* had

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pored over by lamplight a few hours before.

"Tiassi had heavy eyebrows," Grigley patiently explained. "That fellow out there has very light ones."

"He ain't got none at all!" panted the Mick, returning to the room. "Didn't yeh know dat w'en dey gets religion bad dey always shaves 'm off? Quentin must a put 'm up teh shootin' de Captain, an' den de smell of blood got into his head an' turned 'm *juramentado*."

Grigley went to the window. The shower had abated, and a new light came from the sky.

"Mick, you're right! But I'm afraid it won't do any good to hang him, now that he's on his way to Paradise."

"How can he get teh Paradise w'en we're goin' teh bury 'm wit' a pig?"

"But there isn't any pig. I forgot to tell you—the Moros got into the *cocina* while you were asleep and stole the carcass."

"Dey did, did dey?"

The boy began to caper unaccountably.

"Look here, Mick, what's the matter with you?"

For answer the boy caught hold of one of the bamboo poles that supported the thatch, and climbed up it with the agility of a monkey. There descended a shower of straw, followed by the goodly half of a wild boar.

"I knowed dey'd be after it," he gloated, letting himself drop. "So I hid part of it. Don't yeh remember w'en yeh was telegraphin' an' some straw fell on yer sleeve? I t'ought yeh was goin' teh catch me, sure."

The Sergeant turned and grasped the boy by the hand.

"And you couldn't trust me with the secret, eh?"

"I was keepin' de meat in case we needed teh bury a second feller wit' it," grinned the Mick.

"Well, by Heavens, I'm going to keep my promise to bury *one* with it. We'll make it look as if at least Tiassi has gone to torment. That'll be something."

CHAPTER XIX

THE GRAVE OF TERROR

BY THE time Grigley's preparations were complete, the island was showing signs of life. Here and there a native or a small party of natives moved forward, tramping boldly through the grass. Not a few were armed with old Springfields and Mausers, stolen from the Spaniards before the American advent, and all carried knives and strutted in gala dress. This, with its tight-fitting trousers and loose, fluttering, gorgeously-tinted upper garment, has struck many travelers as a humorous get-up. But there was no laughing at these absurd, Brownie-like creatures now. There were too many of them.

They gathered on the slope below the platform, with much bustle, beating of drums, chanting, shouting and confusion generally. But, as Grigley watched, all sounds suddenly ceased. The sun had risen, and through one of those strange freaks of the tropics there was born out of a cloud-tinted night a day as fresh and blue as a day in California. It was the signal. Grigley stepped forward.

"Mick, can you blow a bugle?" he asked.

"You bet!" said the boy at his elbow.

"Find one and give us the *reveille*. I want to show these monkeys that we can do a little ceremonializing ourselves."

While the boy was away hunting for his instrument, the Sikhs brought two army litters out on the platform. The first one supported the body of Tiassi, stripped of every vestige of clothing. On the other was the remains of the boar.

Two of them went forward, and, in the sight of that waiting multitude of savages, dug a grave both deep and wide. A third was sent to release the prisoners, and the entire mutinous garrison, their fetters removed, was soon drawn up as a living screen before the platform. He who had led them out was entrusted with the Sergeant's rifle and stationed behind his charges with instructions to mow them down if they stirred.

The Mick returned with a whoop of delighted enthusiasm. The gay strains of the army's "get-up song" sounded through the general hush.

"Native Princes and subject tribesmen," began Grigley in a loud voice, "the time has come to carry out our bargain. But we will be spared the trouble of hanging the traitor. He is already dead."

The boy translated. The Sikhs moved forward with the first of the litters, and without unnecessary brutality deposited the body of Tiassi in the bed of waiting earth.

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But the multitude murmured. They saw the shaven brows. Their comrade, then, had died in a holy war, probably after having shed some accursed Christian blood. While boasting the power to send whom he chose to hell, it looked as if the *Americano* had at least come near translating one of their number to heaven. If only it were not for the pig!

Once more the Mick blew the mocking, insulting strains of "I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up in the morning."

"I hate to defile the body of the dead," Grigley proclaimed. "If you will throw down your weapons and disperse quietly, I'll have a hundred shovelfuls of earth thrown in between your comrade and the pig."

A shout went up, savage and defiant.

"De behind ones are sayin' yeh ain't got no pig," the Mick hastily translated. "Dey're talkin' about makin' a rush. Dey say yeh've broke yer word, an' 're only a common man, an' can be killed easy."

SOME one threw a handful of small knives in the direction of the post-house—an old Moro trick of war. A huge fellow in the rear of the crowd began to bellow like a bull and to force his way forward.

"Bring out the pig. Quick! Let the outrage be upon their own heads," ordered the Sergeant.

But the Sikhs, their courage suddenly oozing, failed to stir, and with their hesitation the inhabitants of that little station became like shipwrecked sailors in a small boat with a huge wave gathering ready to swallow them up.

The Mick seized the riot-gun from the Sikh who held it, and himself quelled a movement of rebellion among the prisoners. Grigley, left thus alone, wondered what invisible force still held the mob in check. He dared not defile himself there in their sight by touching the pig, and he could not manage the second litter unaided. It seemed as if the end had come.

But at this juncture a woman's voice sounded clear and reassuring in his ear.

"Waste no more time over slaves. I will help your Excellency."

The *mestiza*, her hair flying wild, her beauty marred by the bruise on her temple, seized one end of the litter. Grigley, realizing the necessity of the move, seized the other. Together they marched into the teeth of that howling, multi-headed monster that confronted them.

In a twinkling, the body of the unspeakable beast had been dumped into the grave. The crowd shrank back as if pushed by a thousand invisible hands. A groan of superstitious horror was followed by an abject silence, and an instant later the Moros were throwing down their knives and other weapons in great heaps.

They felt themselves on the edge of a pit without bottom—the pit into which Tiassi's soul had been hurled. They had also witnessed a miracle. The boar had been thrown into the sea, yet had come back. They were at the mercy of the miracle-worker—of that pale-faced madman who had constituted himself their Governor.

At a sign from their master the prisoners melted into the departing multitude, stumbling in their stupefied haste, as if making the most of the unexpected clemency of a god. Little did they think how anxious the god was to get rid of their company.

"*Mi Americano!*" cooed the *mestiza*. "And have you time at last to theenk of ze love of a woman?"

"You were splendid! You saved my life," he murmured. "And now, if we only had Quentin!"

"What does Quentin matter?"

He mattered nothing at all. It was Grigley's island. He held it in the hollow of his hand.

But what did matter was a long black streak of smoke which was now appearing on the horizon. It was the United States coming to demand an accounting.

CHAPTER XX

THE GRATITUDE OF A REPUBLIC

AND yet at first the nautical visitor seemed but to add to Grigley's triumph. The beach began again to blacken with natives. To them it was Grigley's warship, and he was not only their lord and master, but their friend. A score of tubs immediately put out from shore to act as transports for the friends of their friend, and after considerable delay returned heavily laden with soldiers.

For all the soldiers knew, this extraordinary demonstration meant treachery and

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carnage. But with that magnificent nonchalance which marks the rank and file of the American army in all climes and under all circumstances, they fell into order and began a snappy march up the slope.

Half a furlong from where Grigley stood the Lieutenant in command ordered a halt.

"Where is Captain Simmerman, and what is all this excitement about?" he inquired anxiously, stepping up to the platform.

Grigley started in surprise.

"Weren't you sent here? Didn't you get a report of the trouble from an agent from Boston?"

"No. We came to pick up the Captain, who has been relieved. He's been moving heaven and earth to get away. Why isn't he here to receive us?"

"He is here—in his coffin."

Grigley pointed to the room behind him. Then he related the whole story. The Lieutenant's eyes began to sparkle with wonder and admiration. To have buried an *insurrecto* with a pig! It was historical. He had longed to do some such thing ever since he first was south of Luzon, but had never expected to talk with a man who had actually permitted himself the luxury.

Scraps of the Sergeant's story reached the ears of the soldiers, who craned their necks to listen. The strain of military discipline became almost intolerable. Sublime audacity! Could they not even cheer it?

"Stack arms!" ordered the comprehending Lieutenant. "Break ranks!"

With a shout the men rushed forward, caught Grigley off his feet, lifted him to their shoulders and carried him completely around the post-house. Some of their murdered bunkmates had been avenged at last. Let the avenger taste his triumph.

Let him taste it while it lasted. For, good-natured as the Lieutenant was, he at once sent men to repair the telegraph wire. A report was made—by another operator—and a message received of which Grigley knew only what the Lieutenant told him as they sat that afternoon on the shaded platform discussing a bottle of wine.

"I've been ordered to preserve the *status quo*." That was the way the Lieutenant put it. "We may expect another boat any hour, I hear, and there will be some important personages on board who'll look into things."

GRIGLEY grunted. The Lieutenant had not let him out of his sight all day. There had always been forthcoming some new excuse for them to be together, such as this of the wine. And now the bottle—a prime one of the visitor's stock—seemed to acquire an intolerable capacity and to be likely to last forever. In fact, before it was finished the second vessel was sighted in the offing.

"Now's de time teh skip!" whispered the Mick in Grigley's ear as he cleared the table of the glasses and the empty bottle.

But the Sergeant sat still, lost in thought, watching his dreams of dominion crumble. Up the slope came a group of very important personages indeed, and among them the agent. The fellow must have boated it somehow to Jolo, and there been taken on board by the expedition his message had set in motion. He seemed very much at home.

In the rear followed another civilian—a shabby individual who had been watching his opportunity from a hiding-place down by the beach. He, too, seemed at home, and his shoulders were carried at a more lordly angle than they had found it in them to assume since the guns of Dewey first broke the Spanish rule. It was Quentin.

CHAPTER XXI

COURT-MARTIAL

"YOU'D better get to your quarters, Sergeant," said the Lieutenant, in a tone born of the imminent approach of discipline as he prepared to perform the honors. "And I hope you won't mind if I send somebody to keep an eye on you."

So, this was what was meant by preserving the *status quo!* Grigley took his medicine like a soldier. But that night, as he lay a prisoner under guard, he tossed in an agony of wakefulness. He had been unable to get a word with Maria. With her there and laden with the pearls, and with Quentin in possession of guest privileges, what might not happen under cover of the unfriendly darkness?

But in the morning all seemed tranquil. His guards were changed, and the new ones appeared not to have heard of any fresh tragedy. Their talk to each other was all about the Captain, whose body had been taken on board their vessel.

That afternoon Grigley was summoned—

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not exactly to a court-martial, but to what was called "an informal investigation"—that is, to a military tribunal tainted with civilianism. It was held in general quarters, and there, with Quentin himself for one of the listeners, he was compelled to hear the reading of a long list of charges which had been prepared and typewritten by the agent. Conspicuous among these loomed a description of his cruelty to the prisoners.

"It was war, sirs," said the Sergeant, when asked for his defense.

But there were his false telegraphic reports, his killing of the orderly and of the Moro fanatic, and last and still worse, his liberation of the garrison after having arrested them.

The burial of a human being with a pig appeared to be something too awful yet to be mentioned, but the Personages wanted to know about the other incidents.

"As to Tiassi," Grigley explained, "it was a case of his life or mine, and so it was with the orderly. As to the messages, I wanted to gain time. In another week I'd have gotten back all the rifles the natives have been collecting here since Spanish days. And I'd have made their friendship permanent. You have no idea how many lives this mixing of peace and war in the past has cost, sirs."

"Haven't we, though?" snapped the most important Personage of all, who was recently from Washington. "But that will do, Sergeant. I suppose you have no excuse to offer for that grave-and-pig business?"

"Nothing, only that something like it ought to have been done long ago. You have to rule Moros by their superstitions."

The inquisition seemed ended. Grigley dropped into a chair as remote from his judges as possible. Interminable minutes passed, during which he eyed Fernando Quentin. But the fellow said not a word. Finally one of the Personages approached.

"Sergeant," he began, laying a friendly hand upon his shoulder, "I don't want you to think that we, as men, don't appreciate what you've done. We can't officially sanction such irregular conduct, but permit me to say that you deserve shoulder-straps. Strict discipline would reduce you to the ranks, but your ingenious friend, the Lieutenant, has suggested a way out. Those erratic messages you sent to headquarters can be made use of. So we're going to report that you were driven temporarily crazy by the heat and loneliness."

"Crazy?" Grigley jumped up.

"Only temporarily."

The Personage laughed.

"It's admitted that you are sane again, and you needn't fear a lunatic asylum—though for the looks of things you'd better go to Manila for a while on sick-leave. And, as this is such an out-of-the-way corner of the earth, I'm going to try to have you promoted and sent back here in charge. With your skill in dealing with the natives you ought to make it a regular kingdom of your own. There are some other matters to be considered, but I think I can promise that you're coming out uncommonly well."

In another five minutes Grigley would have been free. But at this point Quentin rose.

"SIRS," he began, "I, too, have a charge to make. During the Spanish regimen, when I was the *presidente* here, I had dealings with the native pearl-divers. The moment Captain Simmerman's death lifted the Sergeant to the command, he took advantage of the opportunity to lay violent hands upon my personal wealth. There was quite a bag of the pearls, sirs—the savings of a lifetime—which I was preparing to take to Spain. He has stolen them and given them in charge of a half-breed woman that he keeps about the place. You seem not yet to have made an inspection. Bring her here and search her if you don't believe me."

Grigley, taken unawares, felt his blood boil over, and without realizing what he did he flung himself at his enemy's throat. But strong hands overpowered him. The mention of the pearls and a woman had acted like a glacial wind on the kindly disposed attitude of the inquisitors.

Maria was sent for. Grigley was led away to his quarters under guard so that the evidence against him might be seen before he was questioned further. No polite ceremony about it this time. He was a real prisoner.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MICK'S TELEGRAPH

NIGHT came before he heard another word. He had not attempted to sleep or even go to bed. Yielding the two

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chairs of the apartment to his drowsy guards (now forbidden to speak to him) he sat on the floor, his back against the nipa partition. Hours passed, torturing him with uncertainty and inactivity and plunging him into bitter musings. Finally something touched his shoulder.

Grigley did not start. He looked critically at his guards. The lamplight showed one sprawled fairly on the floor, the other hunched up in a chair, and both dozing. Slowly the Sergeant turned his head until he perceived that a finger protruded from a tiny hole that had been made in the partition. The finger moved spasmodically. Grigley, suddenly comprehending, reached up and gave it his wrist to tap against. Its motions were now quite intelligible as the dots and dashes of the telegraphic code, and spelled out this:

"Them two guys is asleep. Have you heard what's happened?"

Grigley in his turn tapped the finger.

"Tell me, Mick, did they find the pearls?"

"No, and they t'inks Quentin was only a liar. You're goin' to come out right. But the fools has dug up Tiassi and burnt the pig, an' they has sent word all over the island that you only done the outrage while you was crazy. They looks to gettin' back the garrison by coaxin' an' forgivin' 'em. They t'inks everyt'ing can be hushed up."

The Mick was so excited that he could not forbear to second his clever expedient by repeating each letter in a quite audible voice behind the partition. He was obviously in great glee—not so much on account of the pardon which seemed to be intended for the Sergeant as because of the trouble which he foresaw descending upon the judges.

Now that Tiassi had been rescued from hell the stern hand of fear was palsied and the Moros need consider only past indignities. Inevitably they would rise and overwhelm the post as a tidal wave overwhelms a bath-house. This, the boy figured, would make a great man of the Sergeant. It would show—even if he were killed—that he alone knew how to wage war. Let their own blood be upon their heads who waged it otherwise.

BUT Grigley paid little attention to the Mick's ecstacies. It was too apparent that something was being held back, and he must know what.

"Why didn't they find the pearls? What did Maria say?" he whispered, too impatient to continue the telegraphy.

The man on the chair lifted his head and looked around. But, seeing nothing amiss and concluding that floors were made before chairs, he gave up the last semblance of duty and stretched himself out beside his companion. The Mick answered by signal:

"They didn't get no hands on the *mestiza*. She was dead wise an' had skipped."

"And Quentin?"

"I ain't seen him around since the court adjourned. He must have skipped, too."

Gone! And he would find the girl and her treasure, alone and defenseless. This would be his reward for having made the peace of the island a vain dream. Something stirred fiercely beneath the Sergeant's anxiety and disappointment. The military law had shamed him. Here was the call of something primitive.

"Mick," he tapped, "help me out of this, and be quick about it."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE NIGHT OF DEVILS

THE escape had already been arranged for. There was only the hole in the partition to be enlarged. This done, Grigley crawled carefully through and found himself in the Sikhs' quarters. They, comfortable in their turbans, squatted about their hookah and pretended not to see him. Another damaged partition beckoned toward the *cocina*. There he and the boy waited until the outside sentinel's back was turned. Then they crept through the final wall and darted beyond the post-house to the cover of the *cogon*-grass.

For several minutes they lay still, listening. What was left of the moon which had assisted in the Captain's murder now hung low over the western horizon, bathing the earth in a soft, luminous tranquillity.

Hearing no sound, they moved forward with the utmost caution, stopping now and then to reconnoiter. About a hundred yards from the wall they halted. A brown form glided past on its belly almost under their noses. It was succeeded by another and another. The grass began to rustle, as if filled with gnawing insects. The Moros were assembling for the massacre.

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For a moment Grigley lay still, expecting immediate death. Since they had discovered the Moros, how could the Moros fail to discover them and cut them to pieces? Yet nothing happened. True, there was more shadow than moonlight there in the depths of the grass, but the real cause of this temporary immunity seemed to be something more mysterious. Finally he figured it out. These creatures were intent upon one thing—surrounding the post-house without alarming its inhabitants. They did not dream that a white man and a boy could be creeping about like themselves. If they saw dim figures or heard a faint stir they, of course, attributed both to their own scattered forces.

Retreating almost to the post-house, Grigley and the boy skirted the walls in the direction of the sea, and once and again tried to reach the open. In vain. A dusky cordon hemmed them round.

So long as they kept close to the post, they met with nothing. But whenever they went beyond a certain limit they became aware of creeping figures. Finally they were back to the point they had started from, and passed on again to the platform. The rustling noises ceased. The trap was set, ready to spring.

It was Grigley's duty to give the alarm. Such had been his duty from the moment he discovered that the vicinity was infested with natives. But he had forgotten duty. Probably it would have done no good had he remembered. And now it was too late. There came the single blast of a conch-horn. An investing army leaped into being. Torches flared. Rifles cracked. There was a chorus of war cries.

The garrison turned out as if by magic. But what could it do? In another moment the house would be ablaze. They would be roasted to death, blown to atoms by the exploding ammunition, or slaughtered piecemeal as they fought.

AYE, that is what would have happened if it had not been for Grigley's devils. He had wondered what held the mob in check while he buried Tiassi with the pig. It was the rumor that had gone abroad that he was a madman. Then, when they had seen his work undone, they had begun to doubt.

The announcement sent out by the Personages had sounded like a vain boast. Grigley crazy? Would a garrison possessed of such a treasure—of a man actually possessed by great and terrible spirits—be likely to apologize for what had been done and seek to make amends? It was more than likely that the Sergeant, suddenly withdrawn from sight, was dead. So the massacre had been planned.

And now he leaped suddenly before them, brandishing a riot-gun. He bore a charmed life and would consign them by thousands to eternal damnation. They shrank back as from a pestilence. They ran and hid themselves from his wrath. The post-house was saved.

Grigley was truly a hero now. He could have dictated his own terms to the Personages, and not even politics could have robbed him of his crown. The newspapers at home would see to that, let them once get hold of the story.

But he had lost his faith in government and justice. The cup of glory which once he had put to his lips had tasted bitter with the ingratitude of those he had served. Only toward Quentin did his soul still flame. Turning his back upon the post, he led Mick onward toward the sea.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST FIGHT

QUENTIN, Grigley knew, would seek escape in the *barangayan*. And the girl most probably had taken the same direction. So, Grigley and the Mick searched the shore.

The reflection from the waves made the moonlight doubly effective, and the search was not long in vain. Near a cove some distance north of the village was a stunted tree. They moved toward it cautiously. Something that writhed and moaned was tied to its trunk. Near approach showed it to be Maria. Her clothing was shamefully torn. She had been searched.

But Quentin, who crouched at her feet like a hungry hyena, had not got the pearls, for he was still parleying. Meeting only renewed resistance, he began to threaten outrage and torture. Grigley leaped forward. There was a great ache in his heart which could not be quelled save by wreaking justice with his naked hands. He disdained to use his rifle. The last fight was on.

No need to go into its gruesome details.

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It commenced as a man to man struggle, and ended when strong fingers that had fastened themselves about a villain's throat had demonstrated their ability to remain there. Thus was the world rid of the Spaniard. Grigley had only the girl left to think of.

Freed by the Mick, she had watched the combat with breathless ecstacy. When it was over she uncovered a stout rope that trailed out to sea from an unsuspected root some distance from the tree-trunk. As the three pulled upon the rope a shadow floating on the waters resolved itself into a boat—an overgrown rowboat fitted with outriggers and roofed with a collection of grass mats. They plunged knee-deep into the warm surf, climbed aboard, cut the mooring and were adrift.

Drawing the Sergeant after her, the *mestiza* crept forward into the prow.

"I hid zem here," she murmured.

"Hid what?"

"Ze pearls. I knew he would come, and I knew you would come after him."

She brought forth the precious bundle from under a straw cushion, and with it safely clutched in one of her hands wrapped both arms exultingly about the Sergeant's neck. The shadows were deep there beneath the awning. Grigley did not at once bend to the oars, but held the girl close where she had flung herself, leaving the boat to float with the outgoing tide, the Mick at the rudder. Tenderness, long jealous of strength, demanded this much at least in earnest of full payment.

When he did begin rowing it was as one bewildered. Before him lay Jolo, and thence Manila, the world, wealth, love. It was a new life and demanded a new heriosm. Had he been a fiction character he would have been equal to every call, and have gone up from level to level, who shall say how far? But he was only flesh and blood, and life had already sucked him well-nigh dry. He had served his turn. And life was content. It had produced the type of greatness it had sought to produce.

What matter if the exploit was to be kept out of the papers? What matter if the result seemed lost off there in the wilderness? Life does not play to the gallery. To be born and to die—that is the way of greatness as of every other thing.

FROM this point on Grigley's story becomes fragmentary, lacking in detail. He does not speak of it as he speaks of what went before. Good fortune seems to have made him giddy, and to have ended in something rather commonplace and sordid. He was honorably discharged for the good of the service. Why not? One man can not be expected to survive every sort of trial.

And yet I would not call it disaster. No, not if it were indeed through drink that he lost the woman; not though, drifting back to San Francisco, he sank to being rather proud of the little pull, based upon a military record duly purged alike of his triumph and disgrace, which landed him his job in the City Hall. He has enough there to suffice him—visions beyond the common lot that come and go while the humdrum smile at his unsteady hand and blotchy face. Not they but the Governor once realized the secret ambition of us all, felt the high winds of sovereignty and knew the great adventures of war; yes, and in a way, of love. Call him a quitter if you like—yet a quitter who once had his day.

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PLUG FERGUSSON of the *MYSORE*

By W. TOWNEND

THERE had been trouble in the fo'c's'le of the *Umballa* and I had heard the bo'sun explaining how it had happened.

"A British ship!" said he with much scorn. "A British ship, an' the Squareheads jabberin' away in a language any self-respectin' seaman would be ashamed to use. Albert did quite right, an' I told him so."

"What did Albert do?" I asked; Albert being a tall and silent Nova Scotian from Digby way.

"Albert, 'e wakes up an' hears. He warns 'em fair, an' they don't pay no attention; so Albert, 'e jumps up out of his bunk an knocks Petersen down."

And the bo'sun departed in the direction of the lamp-locker, for the sun was setting and the wind rising.

Mr. Harrington laughed when I told him that night at eight o'clock after he came off watch.

"A British ship!" said he. "What's the bo'sun grousin' about? We've only five Squareheads an' a Dutchman for'ard! That's nothing these days. It's a wonder to me, son, knowin' the owners, that we've not got a crew of Barbary apes. We'd still sing 'Rule Britannia' an' dip the red duster to the white ensign, an' look down on everything else afloat.

"I have sailed in ships where the hands didn't understand more'n half a dozen words of English between 'em. You know what that means, eh? Of course foreigners gets paid less wages an' they're a hanged sight easier to handle than our own fellers. Some prefer 'em for that reason. *I* don't. No more did Plug Fergusson—Plug Fergusson of the *Mysore*—the hardest, toughest man I ever sailed with."

Mr. Harrington lit his pipe and began the story of Plug Fergusson, leaning back against the wall with his arms folded and one knee over the other.

WOULD you think it to look at him? No, you would not, particularly. A quiet kind of a man was Plug Fergusson, with jet-black hair an' cold eyes an' deep lines from his nose to the corners of his mouth an' a pale face that never seemed to tan. An' his voice, low an' soft it was, as if he wanted to apologize an' say please each time he gave an order.

I've seen deck-hands size him up straight off as bein' no good on that account. I've seen those same deck-hands five minutes afterward. An' he'd say things in that soft voice of his that 'ud send a grown man stark, starin' mad. I can manage a stoke-hole crowd myself as well as the next, with kind words, flattery an', if needs be, a monkey-wrench, but no man has any right to treat other men as Plug used to.

But mind this! He kept inside the law. Funny, isn't it? But even sailors have their rights. Plug never hit a man unless that man tried to hit him first. With one exception, that is. Most times he'd dodge quick, an' hit back like a mule kickin'. But he'd have goaded a plaster o' paris saint into a scrap by the things he'd say.

Plug Fergusson joined the *Mysore* at Cardiff the voyage after—after I left home for the second time, after livin' a life of luxury ashore with Aunt Maria, Doodles, Meemow, Jujube an' the cockatoo. I never had much to do with him. We went our own roads from the beginnin'; he bein' the mate an' me only the third engineer. We'd nothin' in common anyhow; not a —— thing, except a likin' for Scotch.

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But one day when he seemed in an extra mild temper, I asked him a question that had been troublin' me for a year almost.

"What's the use of always bullyin' the hands, Mr. Fergusson?" I says. "It don't do no good really."

He looks kind of savage.

"I've been before the mast myself," he says, "an' I know what I'm doin'."

He gives a little laugh.

"Besides," says he, "is there a single Britisher in the fo'c's'le?" he says. "Not one. Only Squareheads an' Dutchmen. You've got to put the fear o' God into a crowd like that, an' you know it!"

We'd signed the crew on in Rotterdam, an' for absolute rottenness an' inefficiency they took the bun. I just nodded.

"Yes, Mr. Fergusson," I says, "they're foreigners. If we had our own men on board you wouldn't dare do as you're doin'. They'd be up at the British Consul's," I says, "at the first port."

He just grins at me an' goes off without another word. He didn't forget, though.

Next voyage we signed on the new crew at Cardiff, an' just before we sailed, Charley Williams, the chief engineer, whose manners had been much improved by his marryin' a wife fifteen years younger than him, from Llanelly, comes into the engine-room.

"Harrington," says he, "is the mate crazy?"

"I've always thought so," says I, "but what is it now?"

"Where did he get those deck-hands from?" says he. "Go look at 'em!"

I did, an' I understood what the chief meant. The rakings of Tophet, Bedlam an' Newgate; Liverpool buckos, dock-rats from Tiger Bay; such a cutthroat, hangdog, dirty, dissolute, drunken gang of jail-birds I never set eyes on. Plug Fergusson sees me starin' at 'em.

"Britishers!" says he. "Britishers, every single one of 'em. Britishers, every mother's son of 'em."

He'd deliberately signed on that crowd, I know, on purpose. Times were hard, and the port was chock-full of good seamen waitin' for a ship. Where our lot had picked up their discharge-books beat me!

I knew then what that voyage was goin' to be, an' I went down to the engine-room wonderin'. It wasn't twenty-four hours before I realized that most o' those A.B.'s—able-bodied boozers—didn't know no more about their work than the difference between port an' starboard. All except one man, that is. An' Plug Fergusson started in to break 'em. Bound to Messina we were with coal, an' then to New York with a cargo of lemons.

THE trouble began before we were out of the Bristol Channel. A sailor, red-headed Welshman he was, gave Plug Fergusson some lip an' hit at him. Poor devil! Plug knocked him down the ladder—I saw it myself from the fiddley—an' was after him in a flash.

"Get up!" says he, yankin' him to his feet. "Get up, you swine! You'll talk to me like that, will you?"

An' so on. You never saw a man so taken aback as that there red-headed Welshman. Bit of a sea runnin', too.

I tell you, you might go a long way before you'd meet such a bunch as we had on the *Mysore*. The firemen were only about one per cent. better than the deck-hands. What the second engineer was about when he signed 'em on I don't know. It's my impression he'd been tryin' to quench one of the most magnificent thirsts in the British Empire, an' that Plug Fergusson helped him choose his men. Not even in the *Arabella's* palmiest days did we have a worse crush than then.

Did I mention Saunders yet? No. Well, Saunders was from the village of London. Limehouse, I think, or thereabouts. A broad-shouldered youngster with a broken nose an' prison-cropped hair an' a you-be damned-get-out-of-my-road insolent manner of speakin', however polite the words. Regular East-End hooligan!

Plug Fergusson made a dead set at him from the minute the pilot dropped over the side. Why? I dunno. I didn't understand it. The only approach to a sailor the *Mysore* had *that* voyage, too. Perhaps the mate was down on him for that very reason. Hurt his pride, maybe, to think that he'd signed on any one who could remember for more than five minutes what course he was supposed to be steerin'.

But Plug was sneerin' an' snarlin' at the Cockney from mornin' to night, so I heard from the second mate, but Saunders never so much as opened his mouth to answer back. He was bidin' his time, so I took it, an' makin' life miserable for every one else

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in the fo'c's'le. That was what one of the trimmers told the donkeyman. The *Mysore* was a happy ship all right, an' that's the truth.

Well, one wet afternoon about four o'clock, soon after we'd passed the Rock, the second mate comes into the engine-room to get some clothes he'd hung up to dry.

"More trouble," says he. "Hear about it?"

"No," says I, "not if it's happened since the other trouble at dinner-time," I says.

"The mate plugged Saunders in the jaw just now."

"The devil he did!" says I. "Did the Cockney hit him first?"

"No," says the second. "He didn't. He never hit him at all. Never tried to."

"Oh!" says I. "Any reason for Plug doin' that?"

But the second made didn't know. Said that Plug Fergusson had called Saunders some name as the watch was bein' relieved, an' Saunders had stopped an' whispered something under his breath. An' then Plug hit him. That was all.

Why hadn't Saunders hit back? That's what puzzled me. For you could tell by the look on the Cockney's face he wasn't one to put up with anything like that an' not do his best to get even.

The next mornin' Plug Fergusson himself speaks to me for about the first time since leaving Cardiff.

"Nice voyage, isn't it?" says he.

"It's all right so far," says I; "barrin' the weather an' the food an' a few little details like that. There's plenty of time yet, though."

"Meanin'?" says he.

"Oh, nothin'," I says. "I don't see much of what's going on on decks," says I, "but I'm not blind. The hands are just spoilin' for trouble."

Plug gives one of his soft little laughs.

"Trouble!" says he. "Man, I'm just askin' for it!"

"Well an' good," says I. "But they'll prob'ly kill you before we reach New York. An'," I says, "it 'ull be your own fault. They're not a crew of Dagoes, you know."

"Dagoes or Dutchmen or Squareheads, it's all the same to me," says Plug Fergusson. "They're the foulest, lowest, rottenest set of Britishers I could find an' I'll make 'em respect me. I'll tame 'em," he says. "I'll make 'em come when they're called, an' crawl when they're spoken to; an'," says he, "when they leave the *Mysore* they'll own I'm a better man than any of 'em."

An' by the cold-blooded way he spoke I knew he'd do it, if he lived long enough.

THE second engineer, him with the thirst, name of Bruce, asked me a riddle once.

Says he, "What way does the *Mysore* resemble an old-time wind-jammer?"

I gave it up.

"Well," says he, "you'll find figureheads on both."

I didn't catch on.

"Not that I'm blind," says I. "But I've seen the cutwater of the *Mysore* a good many times."

The second pulls me up.

"You don't need to look for the figurehead on the bow," he says. "It's aft in the cabin knittin' socks for its aunty."

Then I understands. For if ever there were a figurehead, it was our old man. The most useless, simple-minded old fossil that ever stubbed his toe on an exhaust-pipe on a dark night.

Used to read Adam Smith an' Darwin an' Emerson an' other brainy blighters. Also he carried a fret-saw round an' nearly drove us silly makin' us brackets to put up in our berths. Could talk religion too, as well as any Methodist preacher, if you gave him half a chance, an' wrote letters to the papers about the habits an' customs of sperm-whales of which he didn't know as much as I did.

An' yet when it come to runnin' the ship he was about as much good as a trained seal at a circus. That's what was wrong with the *Mysore*. He shot the sun at noon, changed the course when necessary an' spent the rest o' the time lookin' after his multitudinous private affairs. Everything else he left to the mate. Tubby, plump-faced little man with a gray beard an' a knitted waistcoat; also tender feet which hurt in wet weather. So he said.

WHEN we reached Messina, it was as I'd expected. Tophet broke loose in large chunks. I don't remember now all that happened. Man, it was funnier than a temp'rance meetin' at a sailors' mission. The second engineer got trod on in a scrap in the Piazza Municipio, I think it was near the Town Hall, the first night in port,

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an' the steward was knocked into the water comin' aboard an' lugged out by the night watchman.

I got hurt, too. Nearly smashed my knuckles hittin' one of the firemen in the mouth. Met him ashore one night after he hadn't shown up on board for two whole days, an' he had the cheek to offer to fight me for a couple of bob. It wasn't worth it. I might have, for half a crown.

I dunno what would have been the end of it, if our crowd hadn't started in to wipe the earth with the crews of all the other British ships in port. Son, the lootin' of Peking in the name of Christianity was nothin' alongside the way the crew of the *Mysore* cleaned up Messina. A hooligan who's fought London bobbies all his life for a pastime isn't goin' to take much change from an Italian policeman, even if they *have* got swords an' revolvers.

But Plug Fergusson! I thought he'd be in it, well over the ankles. He was. I saw him one morning after breakfast, as soon as I came on deck. He'd a bruise on his cheek-bone an' a split lip, an' one eye was a trifle the worse for wear.

"Hullo!" says I, an' he grunted. I just looked at him without speakin'.

"Well!" says he, "you're doin' quite a lot of thinkin', aren't you?" he says. "Perhaps you'll think a bit more when you see the man who hit me."

"Who was that?" says I. "That Cockney, I'm almost certain," says Plug Fergusson. "It was dark an' he got away from me. But," says he, "I pretty near killed him all the same."

I was still on deck when Saunders came aft. His face wasn't more marked than usual. Plug Fergusson's jaw kind of drops an' he goes quite red as Saunders speaks to him.

"Beg pardon, sir," he says, very respectful. "Beg pardon, sir, but Evans asked me if I'd give you 'is compliments, an' say 'e won't be able to go to work this mornin'." Evans was the red-headed Welshman.

"What the blazes is the matter with him?" says Plug. "Well, sir," says Saunders, "I wasn't ashore myself last night, but I fancy Evans must have had a bad fall by his looks. He's all cut up something dreadful, an' can't 'ardly move."

Plug Fergusson chokes.

"Oh!" says he. "Oh, indeed! Tell Mr. Evans that if he's not over the side paintin' in less than ten minutes I'll go down to the fo'c's'le myself an' kick him up on deck."

An' that night, black as pitch, Plug gets hit on the shoulder by an iron bolt when goin' ashore. What's more, he can't find the man who heaved it. An' there were several other little things happened to the mate while we were in Messina. A bottle was thrown at him from a window an' smashed on the wall just behind his head. A Dago tried to stab him in a narrer alley, an' Plug half beat the life out of him.

Nothin' in that, eh? But we'd seen Saunders talkin' to that same Dago on board the *Mysore* one mornin'. He'd been one of the cargomen. Funny, wasn't it? Coincidence, of course.

But the queerest part was that none of that crowd we had on board deserted. Why not? By rights some of them should have slipped off, yet they didn't. Somethin' in the air I couldn't understand.

II

WELL, we started off for New York about the beginnin' of February, an' two days after we'd cleared the Straits—Straits of Gibraltar—we got it bad; real North-Atlantic weather. Day after day, gettin' worse the whole time; an' the *Mysore* rollin' an' rollin', slow an' heavy, till I wished the old tub would roll upside down an' have done with it.

An' the food not fit to set before hogs. An' at nights the wind shriekin' like a woman cryin'. It got on my nerves rather.

I hadn't much time to worry about Plug Fergusson an' the deck-hands, but things were the same as ever, naturally. The hands were gettin' uglier an' more vicious each day, an' I knew that the trouble we'd had in Messina 'ud be a picnic compared to what would happen when we fetched up in New York after a month of the Western Ocean in Winter.

An' one night as I went into the stoke-hole I heard the fireman an' trimmer talkin' in whispers to one of the sailors.

"We're all in it. The mate will never——"

An' I couldn't catch another word. But it made me think. When the hands get to whisperin', look out!

An' then, son—then we ran into about as bad a blow as I can recollect, an' for two days we lay hove to, head on. No one

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could go for'ard or aft. The crew—seamen an' firemen both—lived in the stoke-hole, sleepin' in the coal-dust in the stringers.

When the watch was changed the deck-hands 'ud climb out of the fiddley to the wheel-house. The second engineer shared his room with the second mate. The mate turned in on the engine-room gratin's; so did the bo'sun an' the carpenter. Bitter cold it was, too. The old man stayed in the chart-room.

An' for those two days we had nothin' to eat 'cept a few biscuits. The galley was flooded out an' lightin' a fire impossible, even if the cook had been able, which he wasn't, owin' to cuttin' his hand when openin' a tin o' Chicago an' gettin' poisoned.

The steward was down aft, shut up in the cabin. He told us that he spent them two days an' nights with about a hundred rats, prayin' an' starin' out of the ports an' wonderin' each time a sea swept over us when the funnel 'ud go overboard or the hatches burst.

He had all the food he wanted in the pantry an' store-room, but he was too scared to be hungry. He didn't mind bein' drowned so particular, but it was bein' drowned all by himself with nobody near but them rats that took the heart out of him.

WELL, in forty-eight hours the gale had dropped an' a day later we sighted the *Muriel Stevens*. I don't think any of us was the same afterward. For the rest of the voyage, I mean. A thing like that can't help but make a difference, whichever way you look at it. It settled the question which was the best man aboard the *Mysore*, anyway.

About two bells in the afternoon watch, the donkeyman comes down into the engine-room.

"Mr. Harrington," says he, "there's a steamer afire ahead of us. I'll stay here if you want to see." An' in half a jiff I was up the ladder an' out through the scuttle on deck.

It was bitter cold an' gray. The wind cut me through like a knife, an' the rails were thick with icicles. An' there, as the donkeyman had said, there on the port bow was a ship with a big, black cloud of smoke trailin' away aft. Yes, son, think of it! On fire. In the middle of the North Atlantic in that weather! An' I saw through the glass, too, that all their boats were gone—carried away.

I ran up on the bridge where the old man an' the mate an' the bo'sun an' one or two others were standin'.

"What is she?" I says.

Plug Fergusson was starin' through the glasses.

"Tramp steamer," says he, "same as us."

"Is there any one on board?"

"Yes," says Plug. "I can see 'em."

The old man gives a little moan.

"Poor fellers!" says he. "Poor, poor fellers!"

All hands were on deck now, except the donkeyman an' the fireman on watch: not speakin' very much, just wonderin' what would happen an' what it would be like. I knew that by their faces.

The *Mysore* crept nearer an' nearer till we could see the men on the burnin' ship huddled amidships.

"My Heaven!" says Evans, the red-headed Welshman. "Look at em! Oh, Heaven! Look at 'em!"

"Shut your blasted row!" says Plug Fergusson. "You'll have all the lookin' you want bleedin' quick!"

"God help them!" says the old man in a weak kind of voice. "For it's more than we can."

"What!" says Plug Fergusson. "What are you talkin' about, you old lunatic? Help 'em? Of course we can. We're goin' to lower away a life-boat in about five minutes from now."

And at that I felt a cold fear inside me.

"Oh!" says the Welshman with a little yelp, "an' who's goin' to man it? Who's goin' in it?"

"I am for one," says Plug as coolly as possible, "an' you are for another."

"Am I?" says the Welshman. "Am I? I'll see you in a hotter place than this before I go one yard!"

Plug Fergusson jumps an' grabs him by the throat an' shakes him to an' fro like a terrier worryin' a rat.

"You talk to me like that, an'——" Then they both lose their feet an' go slidin' an' slitherin' in a heap down-hill to the other end of the narrow bridge as we roll. They get up again at once, growlin'.

"What do you mean, Mr. Fergusson?" says the old man. "No boat could live in this sea, not for one minute," he says, "an' you know it. It's sheer madness to try."

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An' there's a murmur from the hands, showin' what *they* thought.

PLUG FERGUSSON looks at us, clutchin' hold of one of the posts of the pole-compass an' swayin' with the ship.

"You'd let those poor devils drown, would you?" he says. "Just because you're afraid of riskin' your own rotten carcasses? You see that ship on fire, don't you?" says he. "Well, then, you've got to help me take the crew off."

"If the life-boat does go," says the second mate, "I ought to go with it. It's the second mate's duty."

"I dare say it is," says Plug. "But this time it's different. I'm goin'."

The second mate doesn't argue. Why should he? An' him married less than six months.

"Now," says Fergusson, "we're goin' to lower a boat. Do you understand?" says he. "Who'll help man it?"

How many spoke? One only: Saunders the Cockney.

An' *he* said, "Man it yourself if you want to," he says, "an' go to —— your own way."

Plug Fergusson goes on as though the Cockney hadn't said a word.

"You cowards! I suppose," says he, with his thin lips sneerin', "you call yourselves Englishmen!"

An' even *I* knew there was no sense in that kind of guff. He might just as well have talked about ancient Romans or Hottentots.

Son, it's always been a mystery to me, having been at sea all these years, that things aren't worse than they are. If I was a fireman on one of those liners, an' the ship was sinkin', I'd have to sit around an' watch the passengers, the fat, well-fed, pot-bellied first-class passengers, climbin' into the boats to be rescued.

Why? Because I'm only a poor good-for-nothin', crimp-dodgin' fireman at four quid a month with a taste for beer an' a wife an' six kids at Southampton or Liverpool. Why don't the stoke-hole hands sweep the ship from stem to stern with fire-bars an' shovels? They could easily. Why don't they? The *Birkenhead* drill isn't taught in the merchant service an' never will be.

But the *Mysore* an' that other ship on fire! I can see everything now as plain as when it happened: Plug Fergusson in his oilskins an' sou'wester; the wicked, frightened faces of the crew; the old man mumblin' to himself; the black smoke from the burnin' ship.

"You're the scum of the earth," says Plug Fergusson. "I thought I could make men of you, you black curs, but I can't," he says. "An' I've licked each one of you till I'm sick of it. Yes," says he, "sick of it. An' you're the dirtiest cowards I ever met."

"That's a bloody lie!" says Saunders. "You never licked me, you big bully, an' you couldn't."

They stood lookin' into each other's eyes, as the ship rolled.

"I'm as good a man as you are," says the Cockney, "an' you know it."

An' at that Plug Fergusson laughs. Yes, son, he laughed.

"As good as me, are you?" he says. "No, you're not. If you were," he says, "you'd come with me in that life-boat."

Saunders glared at the mate as if he didn't quite understand. "I'm as good a man as you are," he says slowly. "Of course I am. Better. If you go, I'll go, an' be hanged to you!"

"Certainly," says Plug. "An' when you get back safe an' sound, as you will, I'll make you swaller them words, if I have to knock your ugly face down your throat. We'll settle it then," he says.

Yes, that's the Gospel truth; every word. An' then—why, then——Plug Fergusson got his crew. That scum fought among themselves to be allowed to go. Why? I give it up. An' the red-headed Welshman gives one of the firemen a smack on the jaw for sayin' he'd more right to go than him.

We were close up to the other ship by this time, to windward. An' as I watched the smoke pourin' out of the after hatches in black, greasy clouds, an' the little group of men waitin' to be burned or drowned, an' the boilin', swirlin' seas, I shivered.

You've seen one of the *Umballa's* boats lowered in fine weather, haven't you? In harbor? You have, eh? Instructive sight, isn't it? Can you imagine what it was to lower away the *Mysore's* lee life-boat in that sea? Suicide, I thought.

But I was young in those days an' apt to do things without thinking. So I found myself among the rest with a life-belt on, sittin' in the boat, listenin' to the falls squeakin' in the blocks. All frozen they were an' had to be chopped free of ice.

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A wave flung us high up in the air, level with the bridge deck as we were gettin' the oars out, an' then slapped us headlong down an' down into a white swirl of foam, an' I felt the pit of my stomach heave with the dread of it.

PLUG FERGUSSON was at the tiller cursin' us steady, an' there was Saunders, myself, Evans the Welshman, the bo'sun, the carpenter—from Greenock he was—an' a fireman. Seven, altogether. An' as we pushed off the old man yells:

"Hurry, boys! They won't last long." An':

"Pull for your lives!" says Plug Fergusson. "Pull, —— you!"

An' from the seat in front of mine, the Cockney says:

"Shut your mouth, you fool!" A fact, every word.

I'd always thought that I knew what a heavy sea was like. But I didn't until that day. Not until I was in that life-boat halfway between the *Mysore* an' the burning ship. An' what struck me was the lonesomeness of the whole thing; the feelin' of bein' lost in that small boat far away from everybody.

One minute we'd be sweepin' way down into a deep pit, miles down, with mountains of dirty, green-colored sea flecked with white, stretchin' almost up to the sky; an' then when I was askin' myself if it was any use tryin' to keep a hold on my oar any longer, we'd be flung high up, miles high, on the top of a big ridge of water with the *Mysore* astern. An' yet the sea wasn't anything so very bad compared to what we'd been havin'. Only an ord'n'ry heavy sea, that's all. But I didn't realize what an ord'n'ry heavy sea was till I was out in it in that boat.

A hard pull it was, too; with our hands frozen an' the ice-cold spray drenchin' us an' the rowlocks creakin' an' the ashes fallin'. And as we pulled round to the lee of the burning ship—*Muriel Stevens* the name was—I could see the flames out of the corner of my eye an' I heard men shoutin'.

Yes, an' shomehow, even then, I thought of a crowded London street, the Strand on a Winter's afternoon, the glare of a fire, the people, an' the yells of the firemen as the engines came clatterin' through the cabs an' busses.

An' the yells! You'd never guess. It was them poor, miserable wretches on the *Muriel Stevens* tryin' to cheer us! Made me feel queer.

PLUG FERGUSSON took us in as close as he dared. We ought to have been swamped a hundred times over. We would have been, with any one else steerin'. They flung ropes to us. I thought we'd never get 'em made fast, but we did.

"There's three injured," some one shouted. "We'll lower 'em down to you."

Which they did in slings. We got 'em an' laid 'em down on the bottom of the boat under the seats, two of 'em groanin'. Burnt they were.

"How many are there?" shouts Plug.

"Only sixteen of us left," says the man who'd spoken before, quite coolly.

Hot, yes! Scorchin.' An' cold; bitter cold. I was drenched to the skin. February it was, on the North Atlantic an' the snow beginnin' to fall.

The flames were creepin' to'rds us, an' we were bein' dashed up an' down, an' each second I expected we'd be crushed against the hull. We kept the boat off by some miracle or other—hard to stand up, I remember—an' the crew of the *Muriel Stevens* slid down the ropes, one by one.

Plug Fergusson kept shoutin' for them to make haste an' cursed us—until the flames seemed to break loose everywhere, an' the ropes snapped—with two men still on the decks above us.

"Jump!" we yelled. "Jump!"

Which they did, into the icy water—as we swung clear with our faces scorched.

One we dragged over the gun'le, an' the other—— "There he is!" yelled one of our fellers. "Astern!" We saw him, drifting helpless-like.

"Take the tiller!" says Plug Fergusson, an' some one grabbed it as he went over the side.

Got him, too; an' a wave flung 'em back to us, an' we dragged 'em on board as we heeled over. Bit of a mix-up that was; us tryin' to use our oars, an' the water up to our knees, an' Plug Fergusson an' the man he'd gone after on top of us, all arms an' legs, an' the burned men half drowned under the seats, an'——Heaven knows what else!

Next thing Plug has the tiller again, an' we were pullin' back to the *Mysore*. The

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old man had some traces of seamanship left after all, an' he had brought the *Mysore* round to leeward of the burning ship. So we had the wind with us again. There was twenty-six of us packed into that life-boat. An' yet we didn't get swamped.

It looked as if the fire had only been waitin' for us to take off what was left of the crew, as the *Muriel Stevens* was blazing from the stern to the bridge. All right, eh? The snow whirlin' into our faces as we rowed, the dark sky, the heavin', tumblin' sea, with the white foam roarin' past us, the burnin' ship, an' our little cockle-shell of a boat, with Plug Fergusson, bareheaded, in the stern sheets, grippin' the tiller.

The man he'd saved sits up after a time an' waves his hand.

"Good-by, old ship!" says he. "Good-by!" Bound from Philadelphia to London they was. The *Muriel Stevens* of Glasgow.

I DON'T remember exactly how we managed to get on board the *Mysore*. We did, though. Without losin' a man. They'd broached some oil, an' that helped considerable. Things were gettin' a bit hazy for me, I was so cold. Man, but I was cold.

But at last we all stood on the decks of the *Mysore* with the snow fallin', an' I felt like I'd reached home again. The chief, Charley Williams, catches me by the arm.

"You young fool!" he says. "What did you want to go off like that for, eh?"

"Well," says I, with my teeth chatterin', "if I'd had any oilskins I'd ha' worn 'em," I said, thinkin' that was what he'd meant.

"You'd no call to go at all," he says. "It wasn't any of your business. Go below an' change," he says, "or you'll be laid up an' I'll be havin' to stand a watch."

I waited, though, cold as I was. Plug Fergusson was standin' by the chart-room takin' off his life-belt, with his black hair plastered over his forehead an' his cheek bleedin.' Facin' him was Saunders the Cockney an' the others.

"Well," says Plug Fergusson in that sneerin' voice of his. "You're safe, aren't you, you swine! Next time I say you can do a thing you'll believe me instead of arguin'. I said you could save the crew of that ship," says he, "an' you did."

Saunders went up to him, an' they stood there starin' at each other, each with a hold on a rail.

"Well," says Plug Fergusson, "what the deuce do you want?"

Saunders gives an ugly laugh.

"I thought," says he, "you were goin' to settle somethin, with me when we came back. I'm ready," says he. "Nobody 'ull stop you. Why don't you fight?"

Plug Fergusson opens his mouth an' says nothin'. Not a word. What could he have said? An' we all waited. Queer, wasn't it? An' the old man shouts somethin' from the bridge, but nobody listens.

Saunders laughs once more.

"You're a bully," says he, "an' I'd like to slit your throat for what you've done on board this ship. But," he says, thrustin' out his jaw, "we wouldn't have put that boat over the side but for you. We wouldn't have gone a yard," he says. "An' what's more, we wouldn't have got back if we 'ad gone. I take it back, Mr. Fergusson," he says. "You're a better man than any of us, though I do 'ate you."

An' Plug Fergusson! What does he say?

"Don't be a bleedin' fool!" an' turns away. That's all.

YES, it's a fine life, goin' to sea in tramp steamers! A deuce of a fine life! An' what happened after we took off the crew of the *Muriel Stevens?* You'd have thought Plug Fergusson had done something he was ashamed of. This is the Gospel truth.

He didn't so much as even swear at a deck-hand till we'd discharged our cargo in New York, an' were on our way to Philadelphia. Then he let fly at Evans, the red-headed Welshman, who cursed him back in return. An' Plug doesn't do a thing. Not a thing! Funny, that; wasn't it?

Plug Fergusson never spoke to me about the day we rescued the crowd from the *Muriel Stevens*, but once. An' that was the night we reached the Bristol Channel again about a month later, after a fine crossin'.

"I said I'd tame that gang for'ard," he says, "an' I did. Britishers to a man, weren't they?" he says. "The worst I ever saw, an' I broke 'em, eh?"

"Yes," says I, "you did. But how? You think you did it with your fists," I says. "Well, you didn't. You did it by takin' that boat across to the *Muriel Stevens*."

Plug looks kind of scared.

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"Cuss the *Muriel Stevens!*" says he. Then he grins.

"Well, anyway," he says, "we wouldn't have ever got there if they'd been foreigners, would we?"

Now, here's the strangest part. When the hands were paid off, Saunders goes up to him.

"I dunno," says he, "if it's worth mentionin', Mr. Fergusson, but we'd decided that you weren't never to reach New York. Understand?" he says, as cool as you please.

"How do you mean?" says Plug Fergusson, like one gentleman to another.

"We drew lots," says the Cockney, "the day we left Messina. An' some dark night," he says, "you'd uv fallen overboard an' been drowned. Haccidental, of course," says he.

"Who was chosen?" says Plug Fergusson, not in the least put out.

"That's tellin'," says the Cockney. "But I don't mind sayin', Mr. Fergusson, that we finally arranged the night. Only," says he, "it 'appened to be the night after you made us rescue them fellers from the *Muriel Stevens.*"

An' that was the last I ever saw of the Cockney. He went off, grinnin' to himself.

Next voyage I was second on the *Arabella*, an' soon after I heard that Plug Fergusson had gone as Captain of the *Newhaven* an' had a name of bein' a slave-driver. The *Newhaven* ran on the rocks off the south coast of Ireland, near Mizen Head, in ninety-nine, an' Plug Fergusson was drowned tryin' to save one of the crew.

THE ADVENTUROUS GILLIGAN

By Herbert C. Test

JIMMY BUCK sniffed suspiciously as he pushed aside the faded red curtains and entered the dining-room. He scowled as he slammed himself into his chair.

"What—again?" he demanded.

The other boarders gathered at the Peddy table seemed to comprehend his question. Albert Bates assumed the office of spokesman.

"Won't you have some of the corned beef and cabbage, Mr, Buck?" he inquired with exaggerated courtesy.

"I guess I'll have that or starve," Jimmy Buck commented.

He addressed the boarders generally.

"I might have known it," he informed them. "My jinx day. Kidded the head stenographer about her red hair for twenty minutes down at the office this morning; and the boss was listening all the time. Put my lunch money in the baseball pool and went hungry on Cincinnati. Some pinhead lost two dollars in the cash account and we figured away until the last inning was up on the board. Now I come home and stand up to embalmed cow and——"

Mary Yourinson, the waitress, entered with a high-piled plate. "The other boarders voted for it last night, Mr. Buck—unanermous," she declared. "Everybody at the table said they wanted regular old, home-cooked——"

"Mary," Jimmy interrupted, "we got a girl down at the joint gets ten dollars a week for tendin' to her own business. Why don't you start now and practise up to get her job some day?"

Mary Yourinson appeared pained. She dropped the heaping plate in front of Jimmy

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Buck with a bang that shook the table.

"You needn't bite my head off, Mr. Buck!" she snapped.

Albert Bates rushed to her aid.

"You know, Jimmy, you don't have to eat that 'corned beef an' ' if you don't like it," he jeered. "Mary, bring the grouchy young gentleman some broiled quails and some patty-dee——"

"You shut up, Batesy!" Jimmy Buck commanded.

His eyes lit up at prospect of vocal battle.

"If you have any remarks for me, send 'em by parcels post—they're so light it won't cost anything."

Albert Bates retired from the conversational fray for the time. Jimmy Buck glared at the others at the table, but none accepted his implied challenge to controversy. His eyes fell on two empty chairs opposite.

"Where's Gilligan?" he demanded. "And —and——"

"*Miss Gray?*"

Albert Bates finished the inquiry as Jimmy Buck hesitated. He was sarcastic.

"Perhaps the young lady doesn't know that Mr. Buck has arrived. I think she is sitting out in the park in the shades of evening, closely encircled by the arm of ——"

He stopped as the front door slammed and the sound of voices drifted in from the hall. Jimmy Buck was blushing and attempted a pretense of choking on a piece of the flouted corned beek to cover his discomfiture. As Gilligan and Miss Gray entered he became more deeply embarrassed. He stammered his return to Miss Gray's greeting and straightened his necktie with a nervous clutch.

"It's been a very pleasant day," he offered vapidly.

MISS GRAY'S answering smile might have passed for a grin on a less attractive face. There was mischief in her glance.

"Rather warm for July, don't you think, Mr. Buck?" she replied as Jimmy Buck ran two fingers around the inside of his collar.

The other boarders grinned openly. Albert Bates recognized an opportunity.

"Jimmy's been asking for you, Miss Gray," he struck in. "He was worried because you was late—afraid you'd been run over by a taxi or something. Why, he felt so bad he could hardly eat."

He leered at the usually pert Jimmy Buck and chuckled over the confusion of his enemy.

"He was saying just as you came in that——"

Jimmy Buck gurgled helplessly, shorn, for the time, of his power of adept repartee. Miss Gray became sympathetic.

"I'm sure Mr. Buck could not resist this delicious, old-fashioned dinner," she purred, and blushed at the outburst of laughter that swept around the table. She noted the distress of Jimmy Buck. She turned to her table neighbor.

"What's the matter, Mr. Gilligan?" she queried.

Her appeal to Gilligan acted on Jimmy Buck like an electric shock. He straightened up and his eyes glittered. The other boarders sensed a coming storm and leaned forward expectantly. Jimmy Buck's embarrassment vanished as he felt the metaphorical solidity of known mental ground.

"Well, Old Sleuth," he addressed Gilligan acidly, "what new mystery have you been working on to-day? Come on now, Cap Collier, how many diamonds have you recovered? How many counterfeiters have you dragged out single-handed from the depths of the blue-black darkness of cavernous cellars? Speak up, little Sherlock Holmsey, and tell us of the rescue of fair maidens held in captivity and discovered by means of your wonderful powers of deduction. Go on and spiel!"

Gilligan was cool under the fire of ridicule delivered with ironic deference. He was a broad-shouldered young man with a square jaw and tailored above the average of the rather flamboyant attire affected by Mrs. Peddy's other wards. He looked at Jimmy Buck steadily.

"Well, Jimmy——" he began, and paused. Even the city-hardened Jimmy Buck felt the insulting tone of gentle tolerance inflected in the two words. Jimmy Buck opened his mouth for delivery of a burning interception. Gilligan stopped him with upraised fork.

"Jimmy, I have spent the day in trailing one of the most dangerous gangs of smugglers at large in this country," he said oracularly. "With one hand constantly on my trusty six-shooter, I have penetrated the nooks and crannies of this wicked city in search of my quarry. Through dark passages where the rays of the sun never

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penetrate even at noonday; up the rickety stairs of noisome tenements that reek of danger and death, I have——"

"*Hey!*"

Jimmy Buck half rose in his chair. He was a blaze of harried anger. His outraged sensibilities were plainly strained close to the breaking point. He stole a glance at Miss Gray. Her head was bowed demurely, but the corners of her mouth were drawn up. Jimmy Buck sensed her smile and his fury increased.

"Oh, you Arabian Night!" he howled over the sound of the boarders' laugh. "That's the worst one yet! You make-believe detective, do you think you can come in here and cram you hop tales down our throats? Why, you combination of John Drew and William Gillette, do you expect us to swallow that dope about your being a real gum-shoe man?"

His voice became almost plaintive.

"Why don't you ask us if we believe in fairies?"

Jimmy Buck dropped back into his chair and pushed his plate clear out of his personal table zone. Gilligan was patient.

"I was about to say," he went on quietly as if ignoring the outburst, "that I have about tracked the dangerous criminals to their lair. To-night or to-morrow I hope to head my trusty men against the outlaw band and end forever——"

Jimmy Buck rose to his feet and kicked his chair over with a crash.

"Me for out before you make me sick!" he growled. "You a detective!" he taunted. "You couldn't detect a busted rotten egg in your own pocket!"

II

JIMMY BUCK sat on the high stoop in front of Mrs. Peddy's and gazed at the full Summer moon just peeping over the cornice of the row of somber dwellings on the opposite side of the street. He stole a glance at the girl beside him and flagrantly exposed his admiration. Her face was shadowed by a rug thrown over the iron railing, but the moon showed her dainty attraction of form encased in white. Jimmy moved several inches in attempt to better his view of her features.

"Miss Gray, you don't believe that guy Gilligan, do you?"

The tone of his inquiry denoted his belief in the portentousness of her answer. He tried again to see the expression of her face.

"Why Mr. Buck——" she began.

"For the love of Mike, don't tell me you do!"

Jimmy Buck pleaded quickly.

"You *can't* believe him! Why he's the worst——"

"Please, Mr, Buck," she interrupted. Mr. Gilligan is one of my closest friends. I'd feel deeply hurt if you said anything about him that was not nice."

"Oh, very well!" Jimmy Buck's tone was resigned.

"Very well, if you want to go on letting him string you along like he's doing them other ginks in there, all right. But I thought you had better sense," he finished dolefully.

Jimmy Buck rested his chin in his hands. The moon showed the gathering of deep resolution on his face. When he straightened up his features were set.

"Look here, Miss Gray," he said solemnly. "I've nailed other hot-air artists that were in our midst and I'm going to land this Gilligan hero."

A light of joyful retrospection beamed in his eyes.

"When I came here to board Mrs. Peddy fed the niftiest aggregation of chronic dreamers in all this broad land. We had a double row of ground and lofty little liars at the table every night that would make Ananias forget to touch second base. I cured 'em!"

Miss Gray showed sudden interest.

"In what form did you administer the remedy?" she asked encouragingly.

"I put the kibosh on 'em with my little hammer," he explained proudly.

He continued as if assured that Miss Gray understood his colloquial presentation of method.

"I went after 'em with my eagle eye. When I started we had Wall Street kings; society leaders; Broadway pets and rising young geniuses favoring us with their presence each evening. When I got through looking them up and reporting back they assayed a bunch of hash-house Willies with cramps in their hands from holding on to their pay envelopes until they got home to hand over the money for their board. I fixed 'em!" He chuckled.

Miss Gray leaned forward until the moonbeams fell on her smoothly parted hair and

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delicately beautiful face. A light of amusement sparkled from her dark eyes.

"Are you sure you don't believe Mr. Gilligan?" she asked.

"Believe him!" Jimmy Buck groaned. "I wouldn't believe any boarder in New York. I've lived in forty boarding houses in this town and I don't believe I've found seven people that could tell the truth about the weather.

"I guess it's in the air," he went on. "Maybe it's the air and the evening papers, mixed. They read about dukes and dukesses coming up on the subway and it acts like snuffin' coke. By the time they get home they've forgot the panning the boss gave 'em and believe they're missing heirs. Why, I——"

"What about you?"

Miss Gray questioned as he hesitated.

Jimmy Buck laughed.

"Why, I catch myself looking in the glasses every once in a while and wondering how I'd feel if I found that some Sir James Buck had died and left me a dukedom. Honest I do!"

He shook himself out of his revèrie.

"Now about this Gilligan person. I don't like him!"

"That's too bad," Miss Gray said simply. "Why do you dislike him?"

"Because I'm jealous of him!" Jimmy Buck stated boldly.

He stood up, then descended two steps to bring his eyes on a level with hers.

"I'm just plain, common, ordinary, bughouse jealous." He spoke quickly to forestall interruption.

"Miss Gray, I have a fit every time you let him take you out. I snort around my room, and can't sleep, and want to bite. Why, I've torn up six girls' pictures and almost stopped smoking cigarettes since you came here to board," he mourned.

Both were silent for a moment. Then Jimmy Buck spoke.

"Won't you let me take you to the theater or Coney or somewheres?" he pleaded.

She made no reply and Jimmy Buck resumed.

"If it's Gilligan and his romances that's got you buffaloed, let me know," he went on, desperately. "I'll fix *him!*"

Miss Gray again showed interest.

"How?" she queried.

Jimmy Buck lowered his voice.

"I'll tell you," he said. "I'm used to showing up these boarders' dreams. He claims to be a detective, don't he?"

He became impressive.

"Well, let me tell you, I've trailed him twice to the back entrance of a department store. He ain't no more detective than I am. He's ringing up a time-clock every morning or I'm a shad. I'll bet all that front of his is put up at some ribbon-counter to ballyhoo the Mauds. You just wait till I locate him in workin' hours. I'll fix his feet!"

Miss Gray was laughing.

"When does this take place?" she asked quizzically.

Jimmy Buck braced his shoulders.

"I'll get him!" he said desperately. "Let's see, this is Saturday night. I'll make a deal with you. If I bring home his pedigree to dinner on Monday night will you promise to go to the Hippodrome with me?"

He waited her verdict nervously. Miss Gray arose from her seat and stood full in the moonlight. She extended her hand.

"That's a bargain——"

"Call me Jimmy!" he begged.

"—Jimmy!" she finished.

III

SUNDAY dinner at Mrs. Peddy's boarding house is a fixed feast, timed to begin at 2 P. M. On pleasant days an average of fifty per cent. of the patrons are abroad seeking recreation at that hour, allowing a saving of two chickens in making up the menu for the refection. Jimmy Buck found but four others at the table when he descended from his room. He greeted the quartet cheerily.

"Fellow members of our happy little family, I greet you," he intoned, standing in front of his "place." He picked up a head of lettuce, wrapped the short butt in a napkin and bestowed it on Mr. Joe Schwinghammer of the third floor front with a formal bow.

"In presenting you with this token of our esteem and affection, Mr. Dinghammer," he orated, "we wish to state——"

"Cut the comedy," Mr. Schwinghammer ordered shortly. "We got somethin' better to do than to watch a little cutup."

Jimmy Buck showed his surprise. "What's up?" he asked. "Where's Batesy?"

Mr. Schwinghammer swelled with importance.

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"Bates went to the Acme Social Club picnic," he said. "He was up early to see the raid anyhow and——"

"What raid?" Jimmy Buck demanded.

Schwinghammer toyed with his weapon of suspense.

"Oh, you little bright-eyes," he derided. He appealed to the others. "What do you think of him, boys? Nosey Jimmy missed the row. That's what being in love will do for a man!"

Jimmy Buck's good nature was proof against a successful attack. "I guess I was asleep at the switch, all right," he admitted. "Give us the gory details."

Pleasure in the opportunity to surprise Jimmy Buck drew all four into the recital. From their collective stories Jimmy learned that supposed government agents had raided an old house in the rear of the Peddy establishment just before daylight. Lurid description of the firing of shots, the crash of glass, and yells of surprise and pain from the victims of the descent added importance to the bare details as known to the boarders.

"It was all over when we got around there," Schwinghammer explained in conclusion. "The plain-clothes bulls and crooks were loaded in taxis. We could hear 'em chinking the steel bracelets though," he concluded proudly.

Jimmy Buck was unimpressed.

"Oh, piffle," he scoffed. "Some flatfeet pulling a speakeasy, I expect. Probably shot off their gatts to be sure the reporters would come around."

He looked around impudently.

"Wonder where Miss Gray is?" he said boldly. "I've got a date to take her out tomorrow night."

His tone was casual, but he watched the others narrowly and seemed pleased at their show of interest.

The sound of a heavy body descending the front stairs three or four at a leap was followed by the entrance of Gilligan. He carried a leather bag which he deposited beside his chair.

"Aha!" said Jimmy Buck. "Here's our old friend Detective Burns. Now we'll know all about the descent upon the lair of the evil-doers back in the alley. How about it, Nick Carter?"

Gilligan appeared to be in haste, but could not resist the challenge.

"Well Buck, old scout," he started in the mocking manner usually so successful in rousing Jimmy Buck's ire, "at last I drove the criminals to their last stand. Heading my bold and brave men, I cornered them in yonder rookery and forced them, at pistol's point, to surrender!"

He paused, as if hoping for an outburst from Jimmy Buck.

"As a result of my wonderful persistence and pluck, five desperate men are now clanking their irons in dungeon cells! My work is now completed and I shall depart this afternoon for the theater of still more thrilling adventure."

Jimmy Buck threw himself back in his chair and laughed long and loudly.

"I love a liar!" he chuckled.

JIMMY BUCK whistled as he left the table. Late song-hits, medleys of popular airs of all generations and lilting melodies of love poured from his lips even during office-hours on Monday. With his rival assuredly removed from his path he felt certain of making amorous conquest of the lovely Miss Gray without the trouble of securing data to confound the lordly Gilligan.

He stopped on his way home to buy an Alice-blue necktie and a cane of wonderful polish and flexibility. He was donning the tie before the mirror in his bureau when a call from Mary Yourinson floated up the staircase as she ascended.

"Letter for you, Mister Buck," she shouted. "In a woman's handwrite. Oh, you Mister Buck, the masher!"

She handed over the missive and waited expectantly until Jimmy Buck shut the door in her face. Jimmy Buck opened the envelope, postmarked Wilmington, and extracted a sheet of heavy, white paper. He read:

MY DEAR MR. BUCK: It will be impossible for me to accept your very kind invitation for this evening. I was married this morning. "Mr. Gilligan" and I have been engaged for a year and I think we shall be very happy.

You see, Mr. Buck, we worked together a great deal in a big detective agency (not Burns's) and fell deeply in love. We have only been waiting until "Mr. Gilligan" secured a place with the Secret Service. His first "job" was to run down and arrest a gang of opium-smugglers. He found them in the house back of Mrs. Peddy's and I took a room there also to help him watch for opportunity to arrest them. It was a dandy clean-up.

With my husband's permission, I wish to explain to you that he decided that the best way to throw you off his track was to tell you the truth. He was

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sure you wouldn't believe him. He says you are one of the shrewdest young men he ever saw; and mind he said that the first time he met you. Isn't he clever? He even arranged to dodge through that department store when I told him you were trailing him.

We send you our love and hope you will wish us happiness. My name never was "Miss Gray," so I will sign MARY.

P. S.—My husband's name is not "Gilligan." M.

Jimmy Buck gazed out of the window absently. He tore the letter into tiny strips. Two theater tickets were treated in the same manner. He slid the blue tie from his neck and stripped it into shreds.

" 'Good-by—Jimmy,' " he thoughtfully quoted,.

HIS BUBBLE REPUTATION

BY

Capt. George Brydges Rodney, U. S. A.

IT WAS almost a stage-setting—ranged tents in order along the edge of the clearing; the General's flag, square, blood-red in color, bearing the three white stars of an American lieutenant-general, waving at the right of the tent; the statuesque orderly; the hurrying aides and couriers; even to the gray-headed old negro cook bending over his camp-kettles under a great beech where the checkered light of the May sun dripped like molten gold on the heavy grass.

It looked like a stage-setting; but the resemblance ended there, for no stage presentment could possibly imitate the deep-throated throb of the International Army's gun-fire that came fitfully from the northwest, every shot jarring the little assemblage like an electric shock. The very atmosphere was surcharged. It was evident that the storm must soon burst.

Day after day, the sun rising over the long Spruce Ridge had overtaken long, brown columns hurrying westward, westward ever; laden trucks and wagons; long, venomous-looking guns tugging and straining along the rough mountain roads. Long columns of cavalry—horsemen whose very appearance spelled efficiency—went through the woodland, leaving the track free for the foot-troops and the guns and wagons—broad-hatted, brown-shirted cavalrymen, very different indeed from the scarlet, blue and gold of *l'Armée Internationale* whose thousands were massing to the northwest.

It was the gathering of the clans, for every man was straining muscle and sinew to reach the Army of the Center which, under Ware, the new Commander-in-Chief, was hurriedly preparing for Armageddon.

Three months before, the Army of the North, defending the line of the St. Lawrence, had been forced back by sheer weight of numbers, thus throwing open the frontier of the Great Lakes. This made necessary the withdrawal of the Army of the Center from its original position, so that ultimately the Army of the South, being unsupported in an isolated position, had to abandon New Orleans to the enemy, thus putting the entire line of the Mississippi in the hands of the enemy and compelling Ver Planck to withdraw from Texas.

When General Ware assumed command of the Army of the Center he found it about to fight for its very existence and the existence of its wings, with its back against the Spruce Ridge and its flanks flung wide along the slopes that were blue with the flowering buckwheat. Before it lay a

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victorious army and between the hostile forces was spread a ravaged countryside that showed the depredations of the foe.

To make matters worse, Anarchy was raising its head cobra-like in Chicago and from the Pacific coast came mutterings of discontent, while dread for the Orient was beginning to yawn and stretch in its awakening. For the overturning of the Monroe Doctrine would mean the exploitation of a continent.

FOR years Ware had seen it coming and for years he had been preparing himself to meet the emergency when it should come. No nation can preach peace and practise war. Since 1820 the United States, clamoring loudly that no nation should exploit South America for purposes of colonization, had instituted a most relentless commercial war to force its own manufactures into the markets of the world.

"When a strong man armed keepeth his house, his goods are in peace;" but the American people had never heeded the biblical warning. The time had come when the opening of the Panama Canal had revolutionized the ideas of the world. The nations of the Old World had decided overnight to test the Monroe Doctrine.

Any change, even the most minute, made suddenly in a complex organization is bound to cause confusion. A grain of sand dropped in precisely the right place in an engine can cut it to pieces. A change at the head of so delicate an organization as an army is even more demoralizing. General Ware realized at once that the changes which he deemed necessary could not be made at once. Later he would get rid of his ineffectives as rapidly as occasion permitted, but at present the men would fight best under their known leaders.

It is remarkable how custom can reconcile men to almost anything. An army in this is singularly like a squid that accepts everything, and later, by the slow process of turning itself inside out, ejects the useless matter from which it has sucked the vital juices.

Ware found weaknesses where he had not thought to find them; corrected them only to discover others; readjusted differences, and with the aid of Coulter, his gigantic Chief of Staff, correlated his information to accord with the existing facts. And all this was done, not in weeks nor days, but in hours and minutes. For in these days Ware lived "in heart-beats, not in figures on a dial," till on that never-to-be-forgotten evening General Coulter, sitting back on his stool, faced his superior squarely.

"Well, sir! The ax is ground."

Ware nodded. His gray eyes narrowed to pin-points.

"The reports should be in soon from the cavalry-screen——"

The tent-fly pulled apart and a gauntlet snapped up in salute.

"SIR, General Hughes has desired me to report that to-day I took a cavalry patrol out to the southwest as far as Tanville. I found that the enemy's right flank is in the air at that point. It rests upon an open buckwheat field that is fringed along the west with a thicket of black birch——"

"What troops have they in position there?"

"The Third Division of the Twelfth Corps, sir. It is composed of Borchlanders and Friesland troops."

"H'm! Two nationalities. What guns have they there?"

"Twelve field-batteries, sir, entrenched. There is no cavalry on that flank. Their entire cavalry force is withdrawing by their own rear to the left."

"Austerlitz on a minor scale," growled Coulter. "They mean to pivot on their own right——"

The Commander-in-Chief bent over a map, sticking colored pins here and there along the mountain-range.

"Very good, Captain," he said presently, "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

The officer saluted and departed. The Chief of Staff sat and watched his superior as a cat might watch a mouse. For a long half-hour Ware sat, his chin dropped forward upon his breast, studying, not the map, but apparently a pendant rope in the tent corner, intent, unseeing.

Long ago he had developed the self-effacement of an Indian *guru* and the introspective self-analysis of an old-time seer. Paper itself was not a better medium for the transmission of thought than was that wonderful brain that worked and worked behind the blue-gray eyes just as the twelve thousand horse-power engines of a destroyer work behind her cruising lights. He shook

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himself into action, studying Coulter from under bent brows.

"Do you know General Printz, their Commander-in-Chief?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I met him at——"

"Never mind that. What is he?"

"A modern von Moltke without his humanizing weaknesses. A true materialist type. Nothing that can not be proved by equations exists for him and what his calculations show to be impossible simply can not be done."

"That is how I too have summarized him. I studied him at Spoten when I was supposed to be studying methods of mounting aeroplane guns. He is all that you say, and more. Here——"

HE UNROLLED a great map upon the table and threw himself across it. Coulter pinned it down and placed four tall candles upon the rough table, where they guttered in the night wind. A sentry tramped softly along the woods trail outside the tent and a chatter came from a box in a distant corner, where Ware's pet monkey slept upon a folded saddle-blanket. As far as was indicated by outside noises one would never have guessed the presence of the sleeping thousands on the ground where the long bivouac spread along the sloping hills.

"We will fight at dawn, sir." The curt tones cut the silence like a whip-lash. The tent-wall behind them bellied in the wind unnoticed by either of the men.

"I rarely talk of my plans, but I want you to understand clearly what I intend to do. I mean to take a big risk. I mean to do what Lee did at Chancellorsville."

Coulter uttered an exclamation and sat gazing at his chief.

"They think," Ware went on contemplatively, "that they have solved my personal equation and that their solution can not be wrong. They believe that their solution of that equation is the key to this fight and to the campaign. They have themselves reduced war to a contest of draughtsmen and typewriters. They say that nothing is left to chance. As a matter of fact, Coulter, we trained soldiers know that the most successful leader has always been he who left the least to chance. What I am trying to say is——"

He rose and, rummaging in a field-desk, produced a small card-index, well thumbed, which he placed before him upon the table.

"This is a copy of my personal *dossier* that General Printz has spent two years in completing. It took two men a year to get it for me, but I have discovered their opinion of me. Listen." He read slowly:

> "Brave, intelligent. No great audacity. Trained after European models. See Milfelling and Pschorrleben."

"Now, Coulter, the man who wrote those notes is not only firmly wedded to his own ideals in waging war, but he can not conceive that his own estimate of others can possibly be wrong. He can not conceive of audacity in others unless it is authorized by his own text-books.

"For forty years the Continental schools have taught that Lee's famous movement at Chancellorsville would have been suicidal if made before a European army and that he would never have dared make it had he not known the personal equation of Hooker. They say they know mine now and their own *dossier* shows me to be like Hooker. By consequence, I dare not move. I have no audacity. Obviously the thing for me to do is to copy Lee. Give me the stamp-pad and I will place the troops."

THE canvas wall of the tent bellied spasmodically as if under pressure. But it passed unnoticed as the two men flung themselves prone upon the table, General Ware with the little blue stamp-pad and the oblong rubber stamp that indicated a division, with which he meant to block out upon the map the location of his troops for the fight that was to take place upon the morrow.

"Here I will place Avery, Morton and Bell." The stamp came down viciously. "Here are Gates, Atwood and Holton with the artillery. Put Weston with his cavalry far out to the left by Turner's farm. If our plan succeeds at all we will have use for Weston there, for that is their strategical flank. And now, here on the Granville Road, I will block out the troops for the turning movement. Hopkins will command them and we will give him every rifle not absolutely needed elsewhere. If Hopkins can make this turning movement, the day is ours."

Again and again the stamp came down while Coulter feverishly jotted down in his note-book the details for his orders and the

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canvas wall pushed in and in. There was a vicious chuckle from the corner of the tent where the monkey coughed and chattered over the draught; for the night air was cold as it drew down from the higher peaks.

"Confound that beast Toto! I wish I had left him at home."

Ware threw a bit of paper at the animal and went on with his work. Presently the two men sat back and stared at each other. The plan was complete.

General Ware rose, slowly changed his coat, drew on his gloves and stared hard at Coulter. His look went through him and through the tent-wall to the long lines of his sleeping infantry upon the hills outside.

"I am going to ride over to see McCann," he said. "I should be back in two or three hours. The news will be in from the cavalry by one o'clock at latest. As soon as it comes in, if there is no change, make out the orders to the Corps Commanders as I have directed. Be sure that they get them in plenty of time to get their men into position an hour before daylight. We will attack at dawn——"

"General, have you thought of what will happen if the enemy should discover this gap that you are leaving between Hopkins on the left and the center while Hopkins is getting into position?"

"Yes, sir! I have thought and thought till I think my brain was atrophied. Each move that I contemplate has its reverse side. I refuse any longer to consider it. 'To make an omelet it is necessary to break eggs.' I will take this risk exactly as Lee took it when he showed all the world how to fight. Send out the orders for a fight at daylight."

Coulter slowly left the tent and looked back once to see Ware scanning critically for the last time the map on which he had placed his troops. From his place in front of the tent he heard Ware pass behind him and then he heard the receding tramp of the iron-shod hoofs along the soft woods road. He turned sighing, his face gray with care as he bade a courteous good-night to the orderly.

"He may be right," he muttered. "He may be right—— What was that?"

"The new sentry being posted on Number One, sir," said the corporal.

"Very good."

He tramped heavily over to his own tent; the canvas fly dropped into place behind him and Toto shivered and chattered in his cold loneliness in the big tent.

Presently a curious thing happened. Ware's coat, which lay upon a stool, began to move slowly toward the tent-wall and gradually disappeared under the edge. A moment later the bottom of the wall was raised and the head and shoulders of a man appeared. He hastily scanned the interior of the tent, drew himself inside, crouched for a moment in the shadow of the table till the receding steps of the sentry told that the guard had passed. Then he sprang to his feet and threw himself at the great map upon which the Commander-in-Chief had so carefully blocked out the position of his divisions. The next few moments set their seal upon him, for men age rapidly in war.

"I wish I could have heard all they said," he muttered. "Given five minutes here and the work is done."

In the windy silence his whisper sounded in his own ears as loud as a shout. He pulled from his pocket a strip of tracing-cloth, spread it across the map, seized the rubber stamp and the felt pad that still lay where Ware had left them upon the table. In a short half-minute he had reproduced upon his narrow paper the work that had taken Ware days to plan—and years to learn.

"SO! HE means to hold us in front with these skeleton divisions and make a turning movement to take us by surprise and roll up our left flank with the rest. Yet Printz says the man has no daring! To make merely a show of resistance in our front—and this against the crack troops of Europe! Oh, the sheer luck of this trip of mine to-night! What's that?"

It was Coulter calling for an orderly. The spy glanced about him and again bent over the table, his back to the tent door as the newly posted sentry passed. He took his time over that tracing, for he knew that even if the sentry should see him the soldier would think it was the General at work.

A gust of wet wind drove through the tent. Toto shrieked and raved profanely in his cold blankets. The man started violently and threw the stamp at him, rolled up his tracing-cloth, removed the General's coat, dived under the tent wall and disappeared. The wet silence of the night was broken only by the stamp of the restive

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horses and the low-voiced talk of the headquarters guard.

Standing under his tent-fly, General Coulter received the reports from the advance cavalry, slowly noted them down and checked off time and distance upon his map. When the last officer had reported, he bade them good night and reëntered the headquarters tent. A long silence fell that was broken presently by the smashing blow of a heavy fist upon a table and a deep-voiced growl of approval that brought an aide from his tiny tent.

"Is there anything I can do, General Coulter?"

"Yes, sir!"

Coulter sprang to his feet, for his excitement was tremendous. "You can get down upon your knees and thank the God of Battles, if you believe in one in this degenerate age, for having given us a man at last."

The astonished aide, after a puzzled look at the excited Chief of Staff, withdrew, leaving Coulter seated at the table lost in contemplation as he pulled nervously at his mustache.

"By Heaven, and he talked to me as though I were a child! Was all that to blind me or to persuade himself? I never expected to see in this world such masterly use of terrain. What could be better than this! It will be like asking a man to a Barmecide feast and giving him a banquet fit for Lucullus. Orderly, call in the clerks."

For more than an hour he sat there dictating, testing and retesting his own orders. A scant two hours before dawn he threw himself upon his cot, while the wires of the field telegraph and telephones clicked and whirred with the orders that were to move three hundred thousand men when the first rays of the morning sun should lighten the shadows of the Spruce Ridge.

DAWN came at last; a perfect May day, ushered into being by a crash of artillery that woke every echo of the hills and hung in clamor along the pine-clad slopes. The first reverberating roar found Coulter, iron-visaged, standing before his tent, vast, imperturbable.

To him couriers came galloping intent and anxious. To him came 'gallopers' bearing requests for aid and to each he gave the same reply; the immortal reply of the Iron Duke in like case:

"General Penton requires support, sir——"

"Is he cut to pieces?"

"No, sir; but——"

"Tell him to stay where he is. He can have no assistance."

And again the tense, whispering silence of the pines, accentuated by the swirling roar of the guns where they broke out into full-voiced chorus.

It was Coulter who, pale, stern, even-eyed, sat his horse among the Staff while three Corps-Commanders raged about him. It was he, too, who gave the famous answer that went ringing into history.

"The artillery is overmatched, General Coulter. The enemy means to break through our center by Weston Hill," an aide, reining in a foaming horse, had said.

"Then, sir, we will give them what we have to-day. There will be no to-morrow."

Long afterward, men looking back upon those next few moments told each his own tale, for no two men saw the same. It was a maze to Coulter, who was fighting two fights—his own and his General's—for Ware had not returned and Coulter realized well enough that should his absence become known twenty incompetent hands would be stretched out for the reins. The best that he could do was to remain silent; for after all, once the men were committed to the fight, it was a soldier's battle.

So he sat, grim-faced and silent, while his divisions pushed forward in long lines of cheering, brown-clad men. So he sat and watched that slow but never-ceasing advance of the enemy; the awful moment when two hundred guns opened upon him from Halidon Hill and the consequent lull when Printz found that gap in the American line and pushed into it with all the force that he could gather; and finally that short but heaven-rocking moment when the whole line of the enemy, blinded and bewildered, shrank back under the furious fervor of the newly awakened fight at center.

Printz saw the repulse from where he sat his horse among the batteries on Halidon Hill. He saw the long lines of his matchless infantry move slowly to the advance; saw the attack quicken; saw the American center burst into an unsuspected crater of fire and saw his long lines strain back. Then he heard the renewed roar of the guns and marked the rush of Weston's squadrons

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upon his right. It was the moment for the counter-stroke and he bent to the shock.

THERE was no withstanding that counter-stroke. It was delivered, not when the text-books say it should be delivered, at the moment of recoil, but at the moment when success seemed assured to *l'Armée Internationale*, when all of its powers were keyed up to success. Printz felt rather than saw the two dangerous nippers, those far-reaching flanks of Coulter's, swing around upon his own flanks while the charge of the American center was pushed home squarely in his face.

If there is in this world anything that is really impossible it is to hold and reform broken and defeated troops in the face of a victorious foe who means to take toll of them. From his position in rear of his center, General Coulter issued the orders for a pursuit that should push Printz beyond the verge of exhaustion. Few orders were required, for every man realized that the moment was at last come when victory hung poised above the eagles of the Republic.

Coulter eyed his advancing columns, watched his reserve guns go past in all the maddening thunder of an advance by battalion and noted the quick swirl of red dust where Weston's cavalry was going in.

"If only Ware could have been here to see it!" he muttered. His regret was but half-spoken. There was no time to wait even for news of his missing chief, for he meant that those retreating blue columns should be pushed back to the very shores of the Great Lake that gleamed dully like a naked sword under the heavy skies to the northwest.

Where could Ware be? What could have delayed him? What could have happened to deprive the victorious army this day of the leadership of the wonderful brain that had planned this mighty conflict?

So all day long the enemy rolled along through the knee-deep mud of the sodden roads—for the after-the-battle rains had set in—and from every height Coulter's shells searched out their retreating columns. Bridges were destroyed by Weston's indefatigable squadrons; wagons broke down and jammed the roads and through them all sifted the ruck of the disheartened infantry, a veritable babel of tongues, shrill-accented, self-seeking, flinging their arms aside in heading flight.

Coulter kept his place till late in the day, receiving the reports from the pursuing columns. It was nearly dusk when he shut up his glasses and turned to an aide.

"It is all over, sir. Wire General Acton to concentrate at Tioga for the pursuit——"

He stopped short in his surprise at the sight of a soiled and stained figure that was slowly and painfully stumbling up the rear slope of the hill. Coulter sprang from his horse, ran forward and passed his arm about the shoulders of General Ware.

"General—General!" he almost shouted. "This is the best news of the day. A little brandy, quickly, Major Fosdick—and a blanket. What is it, sir——?"

They hastily made room, spreading a saddle-blanket beneath a bush and watched the shaken Commander-in-Chief as he gulped greedily at the proffered cup. His eyes were deep-sunken and his face was badly bruised. About his head he wore a blood-stained bandage that had been improvised from several first-aid packets.

"What has happened, Coulter?"

Coulter's voice betrayed his triumph.

"It is most unfortunate, sir, that you could not have been here to see the fulfilment of your plans. We are driving them in headlong rout——"

"Then Hopkins succeeded in turning them as I had planned. Printz was in error then and I was right! I would have staked my reputation on it. I *did* stake my reputation on it, Coulter. It had to be——"

For answer Coulter motioned to the staff to withdraw and leaned forward across the blanket.

"NO, GENERAL, Hopkins did not turn them. It was your change in the plans at the last moment that won the day. It was the rearrangement of troops that did it, sir. It was absolutely the most masterly thing I have ever seen."

"Change of plans? What change of plans? Redistribution of troops? I made none, sir. I left orders, strict orders, sir, for General Hopkins to make a turning movement and now you tell me that he did not do it! When I left you I rode to McCann's and—and—"his voice trailed off weakly—" I—think—my—horse—must—have—fallen. What has—taken place?"

"Can you walk as far as the tent, sir?"

Ware nodded and, with his elbow in the grip of his Chief of Staff, stumbled heavily

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into the big tent, where he fairly fell into the chair that a clerk pulled forward for him. His brain was in a whirl. His voice was little more than a whisper that sounded in his own ears like the far-off rush of heavy seas.

"I—left—you—and went to—McCann's. I left him at four-thirty and—I remember riding through—a piece—of woods——"

His voice sank to an inarticulate murmur. The waiting orderly spoke.

"Sir, de Gin'ral done had a turrible fall. His hawse fell ober a root an' when I come along behin' him through de neck o' woods by Gin'ral McCann's place I done foun' him wid de hawse piled on him and de hawse had his back broke. De Gin'ral looked laik he was some shook up."

General Ware nodded acquiescence.

"He brought me here," he said slowly. "The map, Coulter, the map!"

Coulter drew the table nearer and traced the line of the fight exactly as one traces the lines of a picture for a child.

"It was here that you placed Atwood, Gates and Holton with the artillery to hold them in check on the right." His finger traced the blue squares of the divisions. "Here is Hopkins, you remember, sir, in column of route to the left. Here—" his finger hung poised for a moment—"was the gap that I mentioned; the gap in our line that I feared would prove the heel of Achilles if the enemy should find it——"

Ware nodded silently.

"—— And they *did* find it and they pushed into it with all their force. Then Hopkins swung to the right and Gates and Atwood to their left and in front——"

"Yes! Yes! In front we had nothing; nothing, sir. What could you do in their front?"

"In front, sir, we held them in the grip of fate with these four divisions."

He raised his hand from the map, disclosing, squarely in the gap, deftly hidden among the well-wooded slopes of the Spruce Ridge, four oblong blue stamps indicative of four full divisions—forty thousand men.

"These are exactly where you placed them last night, sir, after I left you and went to my tent——"

"I never placed those men there!"

General Ware sprang from his seat, reeled, and tottered against the flimsy table.

"I never placed them there, Coulter."

Politely incredulous, Coulter stared at him.

"Of course you did, sir. You forget. Your accident has doubtless confused you. Who else could have done it? I would never have done it without your approval. Who else could possibly have placed those divisions so accurately in the one place where they were so vitally important?"

"Count your troops," said Ware hoarsely. "Check over the number of your divisions that you have stamped on the map."

"I have done so, sir. The list is correct. You see, when I returned to this tent after your departure, I saw those stamp-marks on the map. Of course, I thought that you had done it at the last moment and that you were leaving the details for me to work out after you had left, so I took two divisions from Hopkins and two from the right flank and put them in as was indicated on the map, where I thought you wanted them ——in the gap, hidden in the woods."

"PRINTZ'S *dossier* was all wrong," said Ware, still dwelling insistently on what seemed the important point. "He thought I dared not take a chance. I did not do this though, Coulter. I'd give my new-made reputation to know who did it. Why, man, it is genius. No less! I can not imagine how those divisions came there. I never did it. Give me the stamp and the ink-pad."

Coulter opened the stamp-box and sought the oblong rubber stamp that General Ware had used. It was gone. He looked under the table, on the cot, on the grass, but found nothing. Toto, disturbed in his warm blankets by the raised voices, raved and chattered and sprang to Coulter's shoulder, grasping his neck with one little paw while he picked and pulled with the other at the collar of the coat.

General Ware sat back.

"Throw that beast out, Coulter. This is serious. Throw it out, I say!"

He slammed his heavy fist down upon the table. As if at a signal, Toto sprang from Coulter's shoulder, leaped across the board, seized something from his mouth and stamped viciously with it upon the very spot from which Ware had raised his hand. Coulter grasped him, pried open the grinning jaws and pulled from him—the missing division stamp!

A long silence fell.

"It isn't humanly possible," said Ware hoarsely. Coulter, purple in the face, answered nothing.

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"It isn't possible Coulter! Say something, man! What do you think?"

"God knows, Who knows all things. We *do* know that Printz was wrong——"

"Printz was wrong. And so was I wrong."

There was a long pause. Ware broke it.

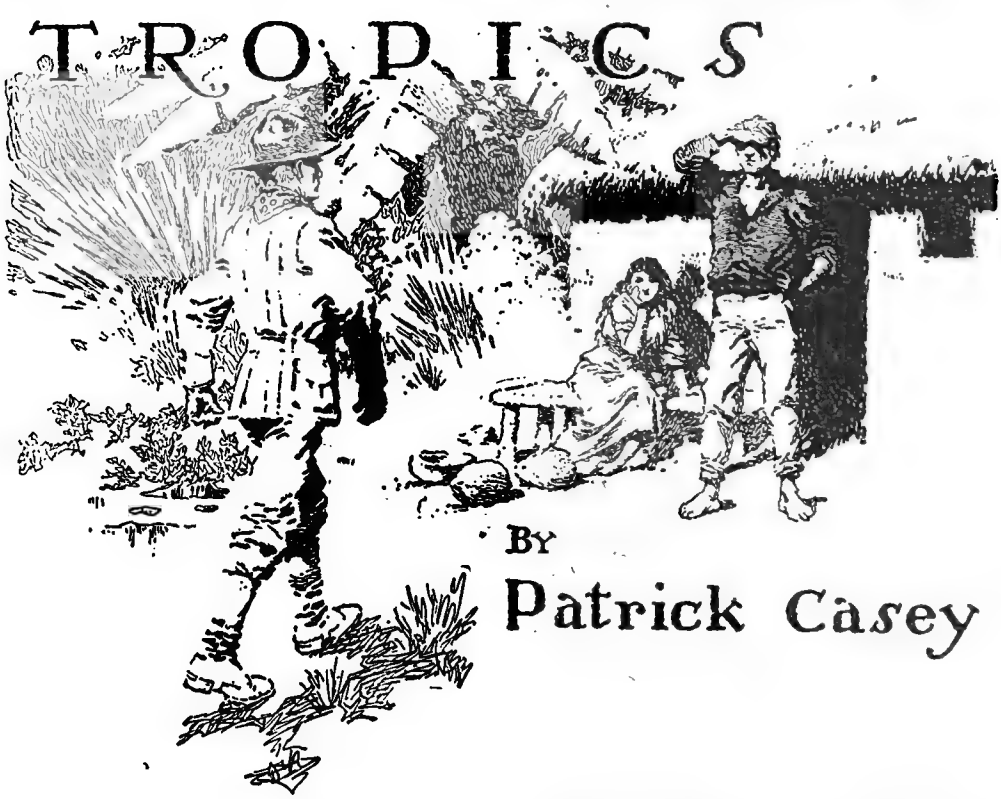
"It is true!" he shouted. "It is as true as Gospel, Coulter. That is how those divisions came to be placed in the gap! That——I came near saying that confounded monkey, Coulter! But he has saved the country this day! Doesn't that show that the age of miracles is not yet past?"

"Either that, sir, or—" Coulter paused and glanced quizzically at his Chief—"or else we have won as we have won before in times past; by the imitative of a monkey."

General Ware smiled wearily.

"It really doesn't matter how or why or by what means we won. We did win and it is that that counts. Wire Acton to keep them on the run as long as they keep three men together."

He laid his head wearily upon his arms as Coulter slowly dictated the message to a clerk, meanwhile absent-mindedly stroking Toto, who, undisturbed by the excitement, chewed away upon the rubber stamp.



"HIS was the same old story," drawled Faulkner. "The heat, the consuming passions of the tropics, got him. Around with the broiling Line and back again, it's the same. You know. Love, free, unhampered love in the moist warmth beneath the palms. Bamboo huts where a white is king; a cooing maiden, part savage, more child; coconuts, bananas, yams; visions of bliss and eternal dozing, dozing——"

His voice droned off into silence. We hunched our chairs closer. Faulkner had first-hand knowledge. He had known the man. The ebb and flow of our cigarette-ends danced in the restless dark like the pin-point blurs of the city of Panama below. Faulkner began again:

WAKEMAN was one of life's flotsam. All his years he had skimmed along the upper crust. I met him first in 'Frisco.

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He was a mining engineer brimming with visions of the future gold-mines of Colombia.

He was from the South. Swell family. He had the look of it. He was tall, slim-waisted, broad-shouldered, haughty-featured. Physically and morally, to look at him, a strong man. He had pulled stroke in the Cornell eight. But somewhere in the liquidity of his big brown eyes floated Romance. That was the weakness. I did not see it, then. He was going south, pursued by his dreams.

The years rolled into each other. I was appointed a sanitary inspector under Colonel Gorgas down on the Canal. We wiped out the mosquitoes and the flies and the rats, bubonic plague, typhoid, malarial and yellow fever from Colon and Panama. We dosed everybody with rations of quinin.

The newspapers at home were clamoring. No dirt was flying on the Big Ditch. But we had yellow-jack and typhoid and malaria the length of the Zone to get under control. Gorgas organized his anti-mosquito corps. I was delegated to the "Stegomyia Brigade." Yellow fever was to be mine enemy.

I was stationed at Bas Obispo in the evil entrails of the Zone where the Chagres swerves. Word seeped down to us that up the river a few miles a native village was in the throes of the Black Vomit. It was off the beaten track where white foot had seldom trod. I decided to investigate and, if the reports were founded, to put the *barrio* under quarantine.

I was proud in those days of the brass cross on the collar of my khaki jacket. All the tortuous passage up the dismally embowered stream I stood in the bow of the *cayuca* and searched with my eyes the banking walls of morbidly bright-colored jungle-foliage. The air beneath was dank with steam and rancid with vegetable odors that weighed like a load on the lungs. The banks were bloody cesspools of red clay. Back of them great coleus-plants, arching ferns, cannas and wonderful orchids splashed the eyes with the tints of the rainbow. Over all, in the stagnant heat, draggled the heavy fronds of coconut-palms.

The yellow stream took a bend. It flowed, deep and sluggish, under the lattice-work of foliage. The prow of the *cayuca* cracked through a myriad of tiny floating substances. They were minute eggs—hundreds, thousands of them. Some bobbed about singly, but most of them were glued buoyantly together, like a frog's, with a thin paste-like matter. They were the eggs of disease-breeding mosquitoes. We were approaching the empested village.

Mosquitoes struck us in swarms. On they would come, thin black clouds in the shimmering humidity, and strike like clammy hands our exposed arms and faces. I pulled my Stetson down over my eyes and, despite the reeking closeness, buttoned the top of my jacket to my neck. I dosed my *cargadores* with quinin. I swallowed eleven grains myself. My system was hardened to the drug.

I broached a cask of crude oil and allowed it to *gluck-gluck* over the egg-strewn surface. A greasy scum like blackish seaweed spread in our wake. That would prove death to the larvæ in the eggs. When they rose to the top to breathe, not life but destruction would be drawn into their bodies. The thick greasy oil would burn like molten lead down their breathing-tubes.

A clearing broke out on the right-hand bank and stretched damply back, for fully an acre, into the shadows of the palms. There were eighteen huts, bamboo-walled and grass-thatched. It was known as San Juan Bautista. When I left that day, there were seventeen huts.

A KHAKI-CLAD American policeman paused below us in the street in a shaft of light from the Government hotel, and fanned himself with his broad Baden-Powell. Some one on the veranda scratched a match. It was as if a calloused finger had rubbed down the length of an exposed nerve of us. There was, in the dark, a vexed readjustment of sitting postures. Then Faulkner drawled on:

ABOUT the *barrio* was no sign of life. The smooth, round stones that take the place of wash-boards, the rough knotty clothes-paddles were lying half-submerged in the steaming silt, and no bronze-skinned Panamanian women squatted, chattering like monkeys, in the red clay. The ashes were gray in the rude outdoor fireplaces. There were no naked, staring, kinky-haired babies rolling in the grassy ways; no muffled crushing of maize before the doorways; no *swack* of machete among the coconut-tufts. No movement, no sound, save only the monotonous drone of the

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clouds of mosquitos that rose and settled in the dead air and flew back and forth.

Pestilence was heavy in the superheat. At each breath the stagnant air seemed to shrivel my lungs. Swishing and snapping with noise monstrous in the festering quietude, we shot through the eggs and the outreaching ferns and lianas and reeds, and banked on the red clay. An alligator, disturbed from its coma beneath the trailing growths, slid with a splash into the water. A baby squealed gaspingly; choked off; and all was still.

I leaped out. A crescendo of grunts arose from one side, one weirdly higher than the other. A half dozen ring-tailed pigs came nosing in the clay. In the stinging sunlight a man had lifted himself from a supine position on the rude bench before a hut. He stood shading his eyes, looking at us.

From head to foot, my eyes took in that man—the interwoven mass of curly black hair, the smut of beard, the makeshift shirt open at the neck, the greasy trousers—once brown khaki—rolled up to the knees, the bare feet. I could have sworn the eyes beneath the cupped hand were brown.

"HELLO, Wake," I said.

He greeted me in his languorous drawl with my name.

"Glad you remember me," he ended.

"Remember you!" I blurted. "Why, man, what about the mines in Colombia? What the deuce are you doing here?"

His lip trembled.

"I'm happy," he said.

He slumped back upon the bench and fingered a freshly cut stack of coconuts alongside. Conversation was not solicited. My questions disturbed him, I saw, like the drone of a mosquito.

Single-handed, I went through the dying village. You know the horrors. There was everything there, malaria and typhoid and the hideous jack. Five were dead—one, a naked whitish baby at the breast of its child-mother, a pitiful little black-eyed thing. The infant's eyes were staring open, its face wrinkled as a hag's.

I did what I could. I carried out the dead to the red clay bank. I buried a litter of unwashed sweat-stiffened rags and clothing. I gathered the refuse in a pile and burned it. I heaped chlorin into the flames. I ran with the iron fumigating-pan back through the huts. I threw carbolic, strong ammonia, chlorid of lime about indiscriminately. According to the stage of the diseases and the strength of the sufferers, I doled out grain after grain of quinin.

All the frantic time, from the bench Wakeman watched us with his indolent brown eyes. He made no move to aid. I thought him sick. When I came to his hut, I found it one of the few exempt from disease.

It was not because it was more sanitary than the other hovels. It wasn't. It was just as bad. Worse, for a white man lived there.

He arose as we approached and slouched with us inside. There was a Panamanian woman within. Ah, she was a woman! You know the kind—part Spanish, part negro, part Indian. But this one was beautiful. Nothing less. A golden-bosomed figure with large, swimming eyes of the blackness of the deeps of the morass and hair that undulated in jet tresses down her back. She wore a loose low-cut cincture and short cotton skirt. But unlike the other women, her hair was not bound up by a gaudy bandanna. Perhaps he had not liked that custom.

She had a manner, that child. The while we went through the squalor, the untidiness, the terrible sordidness of the den, she clung to his arm and watched with her jungle-black eyes his fine-chiseled face. She seemed to think we were going to drive them out. In soft tones of anxiety she cooed up at him. He answered gently and patted her crown of hair.

Every action of them was a surprising shock to me. For the first time, as he replied to her, I saw the romance floating in his eyes. Wakeman was, for all his face, as much of a dreamer as any-Panamanian who ever dozed life away in the moist warmth of the jungle. The miserable medley of love and the tropics had wooed and won him with its vampire charm. As for the child, all she knew was that she loved this mooded mortal of civilization.

I ASKED Wake if he and his jungle wife would take into their hut and care for the pitiful little child-mother of the baby. She was down with pneumonia. Her husband, with five other natives, had deserted both herself and the

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village at the first signs of the outbreak. She might, with nursing, pull through without contracting a worse disease. I emphasized how fortunate he was in that *barrio* of ruthless death.

He bent over his mate and chattered softly. At her answer he nodded. He said he would.

In that space I had been thinking. I would have to go down the river some distance to bury the infectious dead. More; I would have to go all the way back to Bas Obispo for supplies of food and water, febrifugal medicines and disinfectants. Fresh outbreaks might delay me. Time would pass ere I could return. We were running short-handed in those days and I had no white man to leave behind to continue my work. There was no white man, other than Wake, within miles. A man was at need, a white man.

I explained to Wake.

"*¿Por qué no usted?*" I concluded. "Why not you?"

His mouth fell open. It remained open. His eyes seemed to float between the lids in a brown fluid.

"You are the man," I followed up. "Some one has to stay here. You're in quarantine, anyway."

He nodded helplessly at the truth of the remark.

"Now," I expounded, "you'll be in charge. I'll give you supplies and medicines. You'll keep the *barrio* clean. You'll attend the sick. Whenever somebody tumbles over, run up the yellow flag. I'll come after him. As often as I can, I'll be around to see how you are getting along."

"How long will it last?" he asked drearily.

"Can't say. At the worst, till they're all gone. Six months. If they die close together, it will be shorter. Maybe two. There must be five days' quarantine after the last case."

"It will be torment. Do you think I can do it?"

"It will be torment. But you can do it. You're white. You were a man once. The blood's still there—the stick-to-it-iveness, the never-say-die spirit of a white man. Two months or more to make a man of you, Wake, a white man!"

The liquid brown of his eyes coalesced at the words. They gleamed hard.

"By Heaven, I'll do it!" he said.

II

I PLACED the little jet-eyed mother in the hands of Wake's golden beauty. I stacked some dead leaves and wood beside the vacated hut, strewed some oil over it, and put a match to the pile. The air shriveled up with heat. A continuous roar, a single pane of red—and the bamboo and the thatch were a heap of gray ashes. There were seventeen huts.

I went with Wake through the village. I pointed out what had to be done. He was to see that no one tampered with the breaker of distilled water. He himself was to dole out the supply of it. Quinin he should force the well to take as regularly as the unwell. Like food. He was to get the sweat-encrusted clothing from the natives.

"Strip it off their backs as they sleep, if need be," I said. "I'll bring a vat. Then you can boil it."

"It'll be torment," he kept saying.

I collected all the old guns and pistols, firearms of every description, in the village. I cast them into the *cayuca*. I handed Wake my own Colt's .38 automatic and some spare clips.

"That will make trouble," I smiled. "Man, you're going to fight like a white. You'll meet opposition. The natives are ignorant. The quarantine strict. Let no one leave the village. Sear the flaming mastery of the white man on their dark souls. Fight. It will make a man of you, Wake. A white man."

I gave him from the boat's locker a yellow flag. My eye had noted a lofty eighty-foot coconut-palm standing all alone to one side on a jagged spur of bank. It could be seen for miles. I noosed a rope over a twenty-foot leaf near the top. I cut a rude cleat, with its one arm pointing downward, in the gummy trunk a few feet above the base. I tied together the ends of the rope and snapped it taut into the notch. It was an improvised flagpole.

I wrapped the leathery bodies on the red clay in army blankets and piled them atop the heap of weapons in the bottom of the *cayuca*. The withered mite of a baby made a pitiful bundle. I conquered a desire to shake hands with Wake. He had his own redemption to work out.

"*Adios*," I waved to him.

We cut through the foliage arching the

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sluggish, yellow stream. As we made the bend, I could see him still standing on the bank looking after us.

He worked that day. That night he slaved. About midnight the little black mother evidenced the symptoms of the jack. It may have been contagion. The sting, in the removal, of one of the droning mosquitoes. He put his knee on her bosom, pried her teeth open with his knife, and slipped the quinin-grains between them. To ease her final agonies and still the pitiful cries for her baby, he poured chlorodyne down her retching throat. She died, and he carried her out to the clay bank, an uncanny red in the moonlight.

That filled him with the Fear. He visited once more, with disinfecting-pan and quinin, all the huts in the *barrio*. His wife followed, dog-like, after him.

Under a litter of rags in one corner of a hut he found a dying boy. The little chap had reached the end. His breathing was imperceptible. Like sand through a sieve, his temperature was going down. Even as Wake lifted him upon a cot he burned out.

A sullen trio watched Wake from the other end of the hut—a young native, shuddering with malarial fever, his wife, and the aged father of the two men. A dose of quinin to the son. Then the white man turned on the father.

He was an old, old man, knotted and almost decrepit. His teeth were gone. He was loathsomely unclean. But he was well. He had a tenacious grasp on life. He answered Wake's angry questions in a squeak through the side of his shriveled mouth.

Him Wake blamed for the attempt to conceal the dead. Amid squeals for forgiveness, he had him drag out the corpse and lay it beside the child-mother's on the bank. Then, as the old man made to slink back to his hut, Wake informed him that he was his assistant. He would help keep the village clean. He would be given more work to do next day. It was poetic justice.

Then, in the leprous wash of moonlight, Wake ran up the yellow flag.

OF THE two bodies awaiting us on the clay, as we beached late next day, the mother's face looked the babe's, the boy's the wrinkled aged. Ere we departed, three of the six natives who had deserted into the jungle dragged themselves on hands and knees back to the clearing. They were helpless from the plague. One stuck his toes toward heaven. He was the huge negro husband of the child-mother.

"Well, how goes it, Wake?" I asked.

"Just these three."

"And you?"

"For God's sake, give me something to do! Keep me busy."

"There it is." I swept the stores I had just landed—blankets, rough clothing, iron pans, two huge caldrons, mosquito-netting, febrifuges and foodstuffs and such duffle. "Break oil over the stream, boil the mud out of the blacks, shoot alligators. But keep going, man. And you'll do."

We were off, the three bodies trussed like mummies in blankets at the bottom of the *cayuca*. An epidemic in a village midway down on the left-hand bank necessitated our speedy inspection.

From the slippery stretch of mud jutting out into the river and facing that village I cleared the rotting growths and laid out a base of operations. I could glimpse from here above the vivid coloring of tropical vegetation the tuft of leaves of the lofty palm-tree. But no saffron banner broke out, all next day, from the tree-top to hang limp in the heat. I busied myself running up supplies and attending personally to the village opposite. A short distance upstream, on the right-hand bank, I had dedicated our public burying-ground.

I did not want to bother Wake. I felt that in shouldering all the responsibility himself he would work out his own salvation. He would become the white man he once had been. But toward meridian of the second day I got worried about the absence of the flag from the coconut-tuft. Surely the scourge had not been downed so soon. I launched the *cayuca* and with two *cargadores* and a fresh load of stores, paddled up the reeking, canopied stream.

As we turned the bend in a thick scum of oil, I saw the flag jerking up through the simmering heat toward the tree-top. In a trice we were running up the bank alongside the leathery-skinned bodies of a man and an aged hag.

WAKE met us, his worshiping wife at his heels, and behind the pair, the old toothless assistant. Traces of fearful work were on Wake's face. His eyes seemed tempered to a brown gelatin.

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The rudely contrived shirt and greasy khaki trousers had been washed and clung, still damp, to his frame. I noted with a distinct vibration of pleasure that the trousers had been unrolled. They fell to his bare-ankles.

"Not so bad, old man." I nodded toward the two bodies.

"No. They both toppled over, not a minute ago, as from the same thunder-bolt."

A doubt appulsed on my brain.

"You're getting them all? Sure they're not hiding them on you?"

He laughed with the overmastering confidence of a white man.

"I should say," he drawled. "My assistant has been example enough." He indicated the weazened old man behind. "They none of them care to work as I'm working him. Besides, I've laid out a sick-bay."

He explained the plan of segregation. An entire family of seven had escaped scatheless the path of the scourge. He had quartered them upon his poor assistant in the hut where the young native hourly was throwing off the malarial chills. The vacated hut he had established as a hospital.

He led me to it. As the thatched bamboo hut showed ahead, I caught a dull low monotone of pain broken only, now and then, by screams as of unendurable agony. The doorway and window apertures of the hut were screened, I saw, with mosquito-netting. Inside, the walls were whitened with huge dabs of chlorid of lime. The air was stifling with heat and medicinal and sweaty odors that caused the brains to reel in the brain-pan of my head.

There was from the doorway a yard-wide walk, the soggy mud flooring of which had been banked with fresh clay and tamped down hard and smooth and red. Beside that, down the length of the hut, was a raised platform of palm-slabs, six feet wide, with a slight slant toward the passageway.

Stretched side by side in blankets on the platform, and writhing and tossing, groaning and moaning, lay a round dozen sick. They were old men and young, women and kinky-haired children. Over their convulsed faces lay the gauze of net-woven mosquito-screening.

"Looks bad," I commented.

"It's torment," said he.

He went down the line, dosing each tossing form with medicine. One lay still. As he came upon it, the toothless old man darkened the doorway and behind him were halted four of the younger natives bearing two fresh cases, shrouded in blankets. To these he gave quinin. He indicated where they should be placed. He ordered the dead man to be carried out. He spoke in the sharp, decisive manner of a man who must be obeyed—a white man. The aged assistant blinked assent.

We staggered out into the blinding sunlight. I uttered no word of praise. Only I smiled to myself.

We took aboard the three bodies and as many empty water-casks. I stuck the pole to shove off into the red clay. I thought of the unrolled trousers. I paused. I said:

"Anything you need, old man?"

He shook his head in hesitating negative. His eyes dropped to his bare feet and he stubbed a toe into the clay. He felt my eyes follow his. His face flushed, beneath the tropic saffron, with warm color. He blurted out:

"Shoes."

"Righto!" I said, mentally measuring his feet with my eyes. "That's all, sure?"

He warmed red as the clay at his feet. After a long, embarrassed silence—

"Can you get me a bright bandanna?" he asked breathlessly.

That, I knew, was for his bride of the jungles. He had been unable hitherto to afford it.

"I'll bring them all, *mañana*," I said.

I was far happier than my voice implied.

III

THE sun belched shriveling heat many times upon the village while it continued to gasp beneath the horror. The work had settled down to a fearful routine. More than once Wake cleared the hospital of dead, only to find, after a maddening vigil of one or two or even three days, that new cases were falling and filling the sick-bay to overflowing and pouring out into the huts. There had been some ninety souls in the *barrio*. There still lingered half a hundred.

I would row up supplies every two days or three or four, and carry away the hideous freight. Once it ran the occult five that would release the village from bondage. But that evening, ere purple dusk, the lemon ensign of death draggled from the tuft. A man had vomited and stuck his

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feet, within the space of an hour, toward the burning sheet of blue. The iron clutch of quarantine was on like a vise once more.

The racking strain showed on Wake. His face had lost its indolent oval. The cheek-bones were high, the haughty nose never more imperious. His eyes were coals of brown fire. Beneath the snug suit of khaki with the brass cross on its collar, the loaded cartridge-belt about his middle, the .38 Colt's automatic in the holster at his hip, his frame was upright, compact, resilient. He came down hard on the heels of his army shoes.

I knew what he was going through. I was experiencing it in the empested village down on the other bank. It was not so bad when they were dying. The days when there were no stricken, and the hospital was empty, and each man eyed, with glaring threat, his fellow lest he should come down—that was maddening.

On such days the monotony of rounds carried Wake only a little past noon. Then the men, free from duty, would gather in sullen groups and pretend sleep in the shade. But when he was not looking, he knew they were whispering together.

They wanted the iron quarantine lifted. They wanted to relapse into their old mode of life, with all its indolence, its frightful sordidness. Some there were who wanted to flee from the infection into the jungle. That was the ignorant native way which spread the plague right and left.

Wake tried to keep them on the jump. He had them put mosquito-netting over the doorways and apertures of the huts. Oil covered like a film the sluggish yellow bosom of the stream from bank to bank. Dry clay was strewed over the oozing floors and stamped down to stability. He looked about for more work. To that end, he had them drain into the river beneath the trees and undergrowth a shallow infectious morass on the edge of the jungle. They found the body of the fourth deserter festering in the silt.

Deaths had broken out afresh, after that. Two of the toilers were taken down even as they bore the body toward the bank. The wives and offspring quickly followed. In a fortnight, a score had gone.

"The yellow beggars are dying out of spite," Wake said to me. "They lack grit. They believe they are going to die, and die just to prove it."

"They're not white men," I said.

Wakeman knew that morass ought to be filled with earth. The mosquitoes and the infection still steamed up into the dead air from the mud. He hesitated to give the order. He felt that the natives blamed all the recent deaths on him and his love for work. True, they obeyed his orders, but often he saw their eyes tighten to a line with a gleaming center. There were mutterings in the chest. He sensed the evilness seething beneath the tropic indolence.

He discovered that the half-score men stood in fear of his old toothless assistant. No groups collected while his hairless, parch-lidded eyes blinked on them. But he took a *siesta* in the feverish warmth of the noontide. Once he came unawares on their gathering. A squeak through the side of his mouth and, like rats, they dispersed. Then he smirked up to the watchful Wake.

Wake knew. He was no fool. He knew his adopted people. The old man had not this power through his present position. He was a deeper rogue, a smoother villain. Like the Spanish wench that makes love to a man as she stabs him, he was for a purpose pouring oil over the implacable resentment against Wake. He was waiting, like a snake, for the moment to strike. He would wipe out in blood the sweat the white man had made him shed in toil.

AT LAST, once more, the hospital was empty. Two days passed. Then three. They entered upon the fourth. It was one of those intervals of fancied freedom from disease that stretched as on tenter-hooks the soul of every man. Duties were finished hurriedly, slipshod. The groups collected. Ferocious individualism broke out. Each man eyed his fellow with a menace, writ in blood on his eyeballs. Every man eyed Wake, stalking back and forth along the bank with great steps that were almost bounds, and the same menace was written there for him.

Wake, as he paced the clay, felt the glaring eyes. He was a framework of raw nerves. It nettled him. He must do something. Were a man to fall, like wolves they would be at one another's throats. They would try to conceal the dead. It would be as much as his life was worth to run up the yellow flag. He knew for a certitude that this time the old man would not hold them back.

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"Sear the flaming mastery of the white man on their dark souls," I had said to him.

He thought of that. Work they hated. He would give them work. He would make them work. He had it. He would force them to fill with earth the infectious morass.

"Here!" he shouted. "Get out of this."

He strode among the groups and kicked the men. They scowled at him. Some muttered; but all, save one, got afoot. He was the son of the old assistant, recovered from the malaria—a brown, lithe young native with shifting eyes. The white man reached down and grasped him by the nape of the neck. He lifted him bodily into the air. With a jar that bent the bones under him, he brought him down upon his feet.

"There!" he said. "Now you come."

He armed them with picks and machetes and shovels. He strode, at the head of all that sullen straggling throng, through the jungle toward the morass. He never once looked around.

As they broke through the rotting growths, the old man fell back to jabber softly to his son and the other natives. Wake missed him from his side. He felt the hidden drama afoot. He did not look back.

Once, he slipped in the black muck. He sensed, as he caught himself, the desire leaping in their dark hearts to spring upon him and mash him into repulsiveness. He never turned his eyes from ahead. That spirit of the dominant white man awed them.

With a sullen will they fell to on the work. The machete-crew cleared away for the picks the dense vegetation that concealed the teeming black earth. They turned and loosened the muck, and shoveled it from the sides into the mud of the morass.

Wake bounded among them, looking for trouble. He wanted trouble. To a man fresh with vigor the strained situation would have been trying enough. As it was, himself a frame of raw nerves, something had to be done. But no one offended him. They knew. They were growing crafty.

He watched, with a distinct pang of dread, the blinding day deepen into purple evening. He had been unable to brand the lesson on their cunning souls. He had returned to the village to find no fresh cases. Thirty hours more and the irksome ban would be lifted. The suspense was on them like thumb-screws. He could see the natives huddled in watchful groups, their eyes glowing like owls' in the light of the trembling fires.

HIS wife busied over the rice vibrating in a black pot on a handful of burning sticks. A sudden fear for her gripped him. He put his arm about her golden shoulder, lifted the pot from the fire, and went with her inside. They ate that night behind the mosquito-screened doorway.

He lay down, heavy with sleepiness. But he could not sleep. His automat. was on the cot under his hand. He was wide-eyed awake. A bare foot had flopped outside in the grassy way. His fingers closed over the butt and he listened. He knew several men lurked in the moonlight. He slipped off the cot and sidled along the wall. His right hand leveled the automat., his left reached out and snapped aside the netting. There was a rustle where nothing stirred in the windless air.

He roundly cursed the natives and the moonlight as he crawled back on the cot. For long moments his brains peopled the clearing with vague life. Once, he thought he caught the splash of water. It may have been a fish leaping through the sheen-coat of the river. Then, in the moonlight all was still and breathless with heat. Inside, in the dark, his hand on the revolver, Wake tossed and mumbled in uneasy slumber.

He went his rounds next morning—the morning of the last day—searching for trouble. That night had showed him the natives were growing bold. Any moment they might pounce upon him, risking the quick death of the rattling automat., rather than linger in the village for the yellow one they felt certain awaited them there. It spurred the mastering spirit in him to bend them to his will.

He found trouble. From the ten people in his assistant's hut, he missed the wife of the young native. The old man squeakingly explained that she was about the village. The younger one muttered deep in his chest and snapped at him with his ferret-eyes.

He realized the uselessness of questioning them. He knew. Even before he ransacked every hut in the *barrio*, he knew. The woman had gone under from the plague.

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They had hidden her. They might have buried her alive.

He penetrated the jungle to look for fresh-turned earth. That would be the grave. He asked no one to help him. Not even the oily assistant. He had work cut out for his own hand. When he found it, that hand would fall heavily upon them. He recalled the flop of bare feeet, the rustle in the undergrowth of the night previous. That was the burial procession.

But no space cleared of rank growths, no fresh, teeming muck met his eyes in the twilight deeps. The filled-in morass had been tramped into solidity by many bare feet. Whether by the workers of the afternoon or the ghouls of the night, he had no means of making sure. He strode back toward the clearing.

Several bright-plumaged birds fanned by his face, like clammy hands, in noiseless flight. They had been startled from the sun-filtering foliage ahead. He made out, in the stagnant gloom, four young natives coming toward him. They were armed with machetes. One was the shifty-eyed son of the old assistant.

"Hello," he said. "What's up?"

They stopped before him in a sullen cluster, and moved uneasily. Their black eyes gleamed with expectancy. Something was about to happen.

"We have come, *señor*, to help you search," said one.

He made as if to step alongside of Wake. It was a move to precipitate all of them into a concerted action. Wake's hand shot out to his shoulder and wheeled him back into the others.

"I don't need you," he said. "Clear out. *Prontol*"

They did not move. The son of the assistant elbowed a trifle closer. His eyes were glistening and shifting like a wild animal's.

"*Señor*," he said. "*Ayer*, yesterday you hit me——"

He never finished. In one bound, Wake cleared the space separating him from the man. His fist, doubled to a knot, fanged out and landed flush on the point of the other's jaw with all the impetus of his body behind it. The brown head bent like a reed backward. He toppled sidewise and spread-eagled in the growths. Wake's arms swung around like flails. To all sides, into the brush, the three scattered as so many frightened grouse would scatter to cover.

"Yes. And I've hit you to-day," he said as he bent over the prone form.

He halted dead on the edge of the clearing.

"Jesús-María," he said.

It was not a blasphemous ejaculation. It was the name of a man. But not of the young native lying on his face, his arms outspread, in the rank undergrowth. It was the name of the old toothless assistant.

IV

A TORPOR had fallen from the vault of brass. The midday was dead with heat. There was not a flutter of wind. The river was a black simmering sheet of grease from bank to bank. In the clearing nothing stirred. The mosquitoes lay in motionless, droning brown patches on the grass. The thatch of the roofs crackled under the superheated stagnancy. Within, in the obscurity, the natives tossed and sweated and gasped for life from the pestilential air.

Wake, as he stood, felt his lungs tighten and the sweat burst his pores and trickle in streams down his face. Wherever the khaki snugged his frame, the sweat was dyeing it to a browner hue. It showed through at the shoulders and in a spreading circular band beneath the belt at his middle. He made for the water-breaker in the shade of his hut. The stinging sun rays stabbed like white-hot points into his brains.

The mosquito-netting was awry. It draggled over the edge of the barrel. He remembered having spread it quite carefully over the top. That was a part of his rounds. A subtle suspicion caused him to turn the cask over. The distilled contents flushed out and almost immediately the blazing sun pumped it in steam up into the dead air. In the bottom of the breaker, wrapped about a round smooth washing-stone, fumed a gaudy red and white bandanna.

He fished it out. A shiver like the icy-cold belly of a snake was oozing up and down the marrow of his spine. The young native's wife had worn on her head a bandanna of red and white printed calico. The water he himself had set there for his own use.

"Jesús-María," he said quietly.

He made for the bubbling bank to cast

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the stone-laden bandanna through the oil film. He carried it gingerly between thumb and forefinger. He believed it infected with the fever germs. He circled the clearing to keep in the shade of the festering growths. The band of his Stetson, as he walked, beaded with a circle of sweat globules that splashed on the slight bulbous tip of his nose and drip-dripped down his flaming back. He came out on the steaming clay beneath the snaky tendrils of creepers.

Three feet beyond him on a hissing mud-bank beneath a tangle of underbrush an alligator lay, like a dead log, baking in the rays. It was fully sixteen feet long from tail to slanting head, and its brown back was caked hard in scales with mud. The dull, fishy eyes, turned toward him, were lidded; the slimy snout was half-buried in the tepid water which was cleared of oil, several inches about, by its breathing.

He wondered that in the shriveling heat it was not bobbing under the gloom of the arcade in some cool pool of the river. He saw that its tough hide was stretched to a roundness at the sides as if from overeating.

He swung the weighted handkerchief out into the stream. The oil-skin broke in a jagged rip and, with a splash, bandanna and stone plumbed from sight.

The bloated 'gator never stirred. The film still lidded its eyes. It was in a coma from gormandizing. A sudden suspicion impinged on Wake's brain. Whom had it eaten? Quite distinctly he recalled the splash as of a leaping fish he had heard the night before.

HE STRODE out of the lianas along the bank. "Jesús-María!" he called to the dead huts. Then again.

The old man appeared in the doorway of his crackling hovel. Wake motioned him. The brown bent form crawled, like a lizard, through the sunlight.

The white man indicated the yellow flag knotted to the taut rope and draggling just above the notch at the base of the lofty palm.

"Run it up, Jesús-María," he said.

The old man blinked from him to the flag and from the flag to him.

"But, *señor*," he said, "we have no dead."

"We soon will have," said Wake, a certain metallic rasp in his voice. "Run up that flag!"

The old man jumped as Wake's voice exploded. His hand reached out for the rope. It was shaking as with ague. The saffron symbol of death danced in leaps and jerks up through the shimmering heat toward the motionless tuft.

The white man drew the Colt's from the holster at his hip and stepped toward the growths. Brushing them aside, he took slow aim and fired. The cruel fleshy yellowish-brown jaws of the 'gator yawned open. Its long brown body lifted itself bodily into the air, then flapped down, like a bursted balloon, half on the mud-bank, half submerged in the oil-churned water. He had winged it in the only vulnerable point on its hide—a death-shot in the fleshy part of the neck behind the long slanting head.

He turned to the watchful old man at his back. He glimpsed, as he did, eyes shifting and hostile peering from screened doorways and apertures.

"Here," he said. "Get men. Cut it open."

The old man emitted a squeak through the side of his withered mouth. The peering eyes took on the drab form of men who trooped, like brown lizards, out into the stinging sunlight. There were many interchanged glances — at the flag limp overhead, at the toothless old assistant, at the alligator, at the lone white man. A nod from the old man would set them on him like hounds unleashed. He must have feared to start the action when I was coming.

I had been watching for the saffron standard. For Wake's sake, I had been praying that it would not show. Twelve hours more would lift the quarantine. I had *cayuca* and *cargadores* in readiness. Instead of the emblem of death, that flag might be the signal of dire distress.

I TOOK a paddle myself, despite the overwhelming heat. As we grounded on the blistered bank, the natives had almost finished cutting the alligator open. It lay on its back, its soft steaming belly to the sun.

Wake brushed them roughly aside. He withdrew from it the crushed bones and black hank of hair of the woman. He cast them into the bottom of the *cayuca*.

"Shove off!" he called peremptorily to me. "They're hiding the dead. Don't

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meddle. It's up to me. I'll show them."

He strode over and with one jerk pulled down the flag. I swept with my eyes the cluster of malignant faces scowling at him. Decisively he had given his orders. I shoved off and we skimmed, with a backward look, into the melancholy shade of the leafy latticework.

Wake eyed steadily, for a long moment, the old man blinking up at him. He heard the mutterings of the men clustered behind the wizened form. He said quite calmly:

"Run up the flag, Jesús-María."

The old man huddled before his fellows and, save for his fluttering lids, did not move.

"Run up the flag," Wake insisted. His voice rang with metallic timbre.

"But *señor, señor*, we have no dead."

"We soon will have," said Wake.

The scene was much as before. Only the white man's hand dropped on the automat.-butt.

"Jesús-María!" his lips cracked. "Run up that flag!"

The old man blinked at the hand poised on the holstered pistol. His eyes flashed obliquely in thin gleaming lines at the men gathered at his back.

They were riveted by the spectacle. Their eyes, though snapping, were fascinated by that white man with death in his hands who was standing all alone on the sputtering bank. One rush, and they could sweep him into the stream ere the quick death-dealing firearm dropped more than two. But not one took the lead. Not even the shifty-eyed son. The lead meant sure death.

Wake lifted the pistol from the holster.

The old man slunk over to the base of the tree and his hands took vibrating hold of the rope. The flaming symbol crawled up foot by foot-fraction.

His hands, of a sudden, dropped, as if palsied, to his sides. The flag flared, halfway up. He blinked in wild gleams at Wake.

"*Señor*," he cried, "for the love of Christ, *señor*——"

"Up!" Wake snapped. His eyes glittered along his extended arm.

The flag jerked in a frenzied dance to the tuft. There was a sharp crack, muffled by the dead air. The old man pitched outspread on his face in the clay at the base of the tree. A convulsion shook the shriveled frame. The second shot left him huddled and still. A trickle of blood oozed from a pin-point puncture in his right temple.

The yellow banner dropped with its own weight and hung limp in the heat, half-way down.

Wake swung the still smoking weapon on the cluster of men.

"*Pronto!*" he yelled. "Quick! Into your huts!"

They scurried, like brown lizards, across the yellow grass and out of sight, save for their peering eyes.

I glimpsed, as I shot back, the prone huddled form of the old man at the foot of the tree. We had been within an ace of turning the bend when, with the muffled crack, I had seen the flag drop like a plummet from the tuft. I sensed what had taken place. I sprang out, ere we beached, and grasped Wake by the hand. I shook hands with him.

"You're a white man," I said.

The deeply tanned skin of his face drew to the bursting-point over the cheek-bones in a weary smile.

"It's fair torment!" he said drearily.

V

A STRANGE, ominous tattoo far off down the sky aroused Wake from staring vacantly after us. It was like the roll of a monstrous drum. He looked across the river and over the tall palm-tufts of the dense jungle on the other bank, beheld a black mass of clouds rolling and tumbling in a race up the blazing vault. He made for the hut. A tropical storm was afoot which would cleanse the pestilence from the land.

A wisp of wind, faint and velvety, fanned like a tonic through his parched body. As he swung the bamboo door to and shot the wooden bolt, the second breath of wind, a swirling gust, smote the *barrio*. The hut shook to its clay flooring, the bamboo walls gave pliantly, and the thatch of the roof lifted plumb into the air. He saw, between the spaces, the clouds flocking up in black phalanxes. Flakes of tinder-rot, fine as gem-dust, spattered down and from one, on the cot, a furry gray-black tarantula wriggled, then scampered across the room and back up the wall.

Outside, as he closed the window aperture, he saw the air filled with 'steen-foot

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leaves, flayed from the tufts and hurtling stem-on for the hut, sheer dead weights. The lofty, lithe palms were tossing tufts to and fro, and twisting and snapping like whip-cords, and bending tense as bows to earth. He could hear from all about the dull thudding of coconuts. He saw that the oil coat of the fretted river had been swept, as by some gigantic hand, to the bank.

The scorched grass of the roof, with a metallic click, settled back. A gloom, thick and sweltering and breathless, fell ere dusk like a pall over the land. The world stood still, waiting.

A rap resounded from the roof. Another and then another. They were nodules of warm moisture, huge and heavy as bullets. Then came the rain, a deluge, a flood—a solid, slanting sheet of water that chuted drops like pebbles down in unbroken streams. The river, the huts, the tossing jungle were blotted out. The whole globe was a leaden slant of water.

Out in the tumult of elements a vague form detached itself from a hut. Bending low to the gummy ground to avoid being brained by a winging leaf, he made through the terrific downpour for Wake's hovel. He was the son of the dead assistant.

A baby was dying of the fever in his hut, he said. It was the youngest of the family of seven. Would the *señor* come?

The white man searched the deeps of the shifting eyes of the saturated figure before him. He suspected treachery. Treachery he feared. It would be like their mongrel blood on a night like that—the subtile craftiness of the Spanish, the deadly rancor of the Indian, the bloody ferocity of the negro in them. His chin bit forward. He would go. He buckled on belt and holster. He reached for his Stetson.

His wife glided softly to him and laid a gently restraining hand on his arm. She was afraid. She wanted him with her that raging night. She was womanly-weak. Also, there was a terrifying dizziness in her head and her ears were buzzing as with the drone of a multitude of mosquitoes. She attributed it to an overdose of quinin. Secretly, she feared worse. But all she said was:

"Don't go, *caro mio.*"

He smiled down at her cooing mouth, into her liquid black eyes. He lifted her dimpled brown baby-hand from his sleeve. He shook his head at her as at a naughty child.

"No, no, *chiquita.* I must."

She moved back. She watched him, love and helplessness moist in her swimming eyes.

HE STEPPED with the native out into the gloomy cataract of waters. The man led, stooping far forward over the silt. Wake took firm hold with left hand of the dripping end of the other's *camisa.* He would not risk losing his guide in that storm. In his right hand was the automat., loaded and ready for quick work.

A vague shadow followed them through the obscuring sheet. It was Wake's golden wife. A double fear was at her throat—fear for his safety and nameless fear of that whirling in her head.

They knew it not. They could not see her through the solid dusk and streams, nor she them.

The report proved true. The poor little baby was shriveled horribly with the fever. Wake, wet as he was through and through, did what he could. He instructed them, if it lived, to bring it to the sick-ward in the morning. He could not part it on that night from its wailing mother. He penetrated once more into the hurly-burly of elements.

Once back in the hut, he missed his wife. Fear crept into his skull and coiled tight around his chilled brains. Fear for her. Fear for her life in that avalanche of mighty forces outside. Fear of the mongrel men and their hideous forms of treachery, of torture.

He pulled his Stetson down over his eyes to emerge in search into the inky tempest once again. As he did, he shuddered in every nerve-center from head to foot. It was a shivering-fit. It presaged the fever. He sank with a groan back upon the cot.

"My Heaven!" he said. "Have I got it?"

He swallowed grain after grain of quinin. He rose from the cot to leave. It was a struggle. A hot wave seemed to singe every tissue and fiber of his frame. Followed an icy chill. His brains giddied round, from the fever and the drug, as if the forces catapulting outside were whirling them in the brain-pan of his head.

He took a determined step toward the door. As he did, he lost all sense of balance. He pitched back full-length upon the cot.

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The automat. dropped from his limp fingers and thudded to the couch beside him. The while the rain hurtled down with great brooding patience, drowning jungle and clearing and thundering upon the roof of the hut, he lay beneath in a state of lethargy, burning and icing by turns.

He roused from the torpor, how many hours later he knew not. His brains ran sluggishly with feverish drowsiness. Yet a sense of danger weighed on his soul like the leaden fever on his body. All about him it was black—thick, inky black. The night boomed like a huge gong with the stupendous downpour. His pulse, with sudden fear, gushed like mighty combers in his ears. A prolonged dull scrunch-scrunch from the clay floor, quite distinct against the monotonous pour of the rain, was the cause. It sounded as if something was pulling itself with weary effort toward him.

Terrible horror iced every nerve of him. It was like the chill clutch of paralysis. He could not move. Only his dizzy brains could move. They flashed and flared with thoughts of natives, of machetes, of mutterings and eyes, furtive and malignant. They had come for him.

A rasping hiccup, hiccup, like some one retching or sobbing, shattered the vise-grip of horror. Madly he shouted. He sat bolt upright in the dark. His fingers closed over the butt of the automat.

He sensed the outline of a vague form on the floor. It was blacker than the dark. It was crouched.

A pencil of flame spat out. A sharp, cruel crack and two screams burst the membrane of his ears. One was awful. It was his own. The fiber of bullet-light had shown him his mistake. Ghastly mistake. Irretrievable. He had killed the thing he loved.

THE sun, heavy and swollen, rose in a dye-blue sky. The rain had ceased abruptly as it had started. The entire landscape was one musty seethe of steam. The feverish rays were sucking up the water that had cascaded through the night.

I saw that the lofty signal-palm had withstood the squall. Its stripped scanty tuft bobbed in the middle of the shimmering mist. As I looked for it, I saw the yellow flag zigzag to the top. I launched the *cayuca* and with my two *cargadores* coursed beneath the thick, dripping arcade up the yellow stream to Wake.

We rounded the jagged spur and beached far in on the bank—a bloody cesspool of mud deeply furrowed with drains that ran yellow. But despite the flag draggling overhead, no body lay outstretched in the silt. No sign of life was visible. The *barrio* was dead. It lay like a great drab steaming caldron before us. The roof of one hut hung off an edge, the bamboo door of another had fallen outward. About, the flayed palms drip-dripped liquid ooze upon the black-green undergwoth. Otherwise, nothing stirred in the humid stillness. It was depressing. Unbearable. I shouted.

Not a peering eye showed from the dead huts. I set one of the *cargadores* to searching the village for the natives. With the other, I made across the spongy ground and disheveled grass for Wake's hovel. Again I shouted. I saw that the door of it was closed.

As we drew near, suddenly it snapped open. Out into the mist-cloaked sunlight, in his arms the muddied form of the jungle woman, strode Wakeman. His brown eyes were deep-sunken. The high cheek-bones seemed bursting through the saffron parchment of skin.

He waved us aside. He splashed through the mire and tenderly laid his dead in the bottom of the *cayuca*. He strode over to the signal-palm and with one jerk shot the flag down to the notch.

The *cargador* who had been ransacking the huts floundered through the mud and grass, a withered baby's corpse in his arms. The pitiful little body was all that was left of the natives in the *barrio*. They had taken to the dripping jungle. I placed the shriveled form beside the golden woman's.

I started with Wake to finish the rounds of the hovels. I said not a word to him, nor he to me. The *cargadores* I had sent with the dead down the river to the burying-ground. As we flung our legs wide apart through the water-soaked ground, I saw Wake reel and catch himself. I looked at him. His lips were drawn tight to the cracking point over his teeth.

"I killed her," he said abruptly, as he felt my eyes upon him.

I nodded. I could fathom the rest. I did not want him to tell me. I wanted him to forget. I thought it was for the best that she was dead. Now nothing bound

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him to his old life. He was a white man.

I made into a dark hut. Inside, I turned expecting to find Wake at my heels. He was clutching the jamb of the door. Even as I looked, he pulled himself up. He turned from me. He staggered through the mire toward the signal-palm.

I was out of the hut and after him. The flag was part way up ere I gripped his arm.

"Wake," I said, "we have no dead."

"We soon will have," said he. In his voice, for the first time, was a certain note of satisfaction.

That night, Wakeman went with his dead.

THE cigarettes were pasted dead on our lips. The ghost-lights were winking out in the velvety dark.

"That's the epic of Wakeman's life," said Faulkner. "It's like the tropics. Stirring dawn, the listless indolence of meridian, the brief exhilaration of eventide, and then night, black, breathing, elemental—full of the nameless. It fills me with awe, that story. Just like the tropics. It is incomprehensible, profound, utter."

PAWNS of LIBERTY

BY

Corrinne and Radoslav Tsanoff

SYNOPSIS:—Half a score of patriots, in the days before the recent Balkan wars, hold up the tax wagon of **Murad Pasha**, getting 200,000 piasters as a nucleus of a war fund. The only ones in the secret are **Stavry** the money-lender, and **Mirko**, younger brother of **Dobry** the icon-painter, one of the leaders. The real leader, **Adalena**, girl revolutionist, is wounded, and, disguised as a monk, takes refuge in the mountain cave of **Boyan** the young hermit, receiving respect and hospitality. **Boyan** gets supplies through **Uncle Tosho**, father of **Ivan** the huntsman, one of the patriots.

CHAPTER IX

THE SENSE OF BEING WAITED FOR

AS BOYAN the hermit climbed the tortuous path to his cave, only his hood and cassock proclaimed the anchorite. He sprang lightly over the rocks, stopping now and then to draw full, deep breaths of the clear mountain air or whistle an answer to some bird-call from the woods. But for the hood and cassock, not the wildest imagination would have pictured him barefoot and shivering before a lithographed Virgin.

Boyan was still the recluse fanatic, but the past two weeks had broken in upon his most pious habits. At first the girl needed constant attention. Then, as the wound healed, he became timid about asking woman's help, and now he no longer desired it. There was a peculiar sense of at-homeness in his heart; a sense of being waited for. So, without caring to know just

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why, Boyan bounded up the path like a peasant lad on a holiday, scarcely feeling the heavy sack on his shoulders or the jug he carried in his hand.

He laughed to himself as he thought of old Tosho's amazement at the quantity of food he demanded, and his care that it be fresh and good.

"Perhaps you'd better give him some of your fruit-cakes, Yana," the old man had remarked jokingly. "You'll still have time to mix another batch before Christmas. And maybe a jug of plum-brew since the Holy Brother has taken to living so fatly."

"It is not that I would fill my body with the lusts of the flesh, good uncle," Boyan replied, "but when last your bold Ivan visited my nook, he reproached my hospitality severely."

"You are expecting my Ivan!" Yana exclaimed. "Tosho is a fool. When did a few dried carrots and water satisfy my big lad? I'll see that your load is heavy enough, Holy Brother; and tell him not to forget his old mother," and she hurried away.

It had not been an intentional lie and Boyan's conscience was easy—the more so perhaps as he realized that the milk, foaming in his jug, would bring bounding life back to his strange guest.

The squirrels chattered at him in friendly wise from the bare branches of the trees. Chipmunks peeped from the dry leaves or whisked about fallen logs, knowing no fear of the black-clad figure. Now and then he scattered a few crumbs over the path as offering for the chickadees and sparrows that twittered among the pines, willing to brave the winter's cold.

As the mouth of the cave came in view, a friendly glow lighted up the entrance walls. Boyan gave a clear, piercing whistle, repeated three times. A figure in cassock appeared at the opening. She came down the path limping slightly, and when she reached the clearing in the pines, the glowing noonday sun glinted on thick braids of blue-black hair.

"How long you have been, Boyan! I am almost starved, with nothing to eat but water-cresses."

"The Lord gives but doesn't carry home for you," the hermit answered merrily, "and it is a stiff climb from Uncle Tosho's."

They walked together to the cave.

"They are in pretty much of a mix-up down there," Boyan went on. "I don't just understand it myself; a big robbery; treasure hunting and all that. The night-watchman, Manio, followed me up the trail for thirty minutes saying he knows of some men up in the mountains who, he thinks, are guarding a treasure. He has enlisted one Stavry to help him hoodwink them. The only thing he seems afraid of is the ghost of Grandpa Petko, who appears to have some hold on the money-bags. He wanted me to offer prayers——"

"Who is Stavry?" the girl interrupted suddenly, stopping in front of him. "The money-lender of Goreno?"

"I think so. Why?"

"How did Manio get acquainted with him?"

"He came up with a posse in connection with the robbery. They were searching Uncle Tosho's place. Manio jabbered of treasure and roused Stavry's suspicions. Tosho says Stavry could smell a silver medjidieh in a clay-bank. I'm afraid the old uncle is having some trouble. Why, what is the matter?"

The girl was one intense, pale eagerness.

"Do you know what the robbery was; when it happened?"

"I'm not sure." He was surprised at her interest. "But I think it concerns the taxes and happened some time ago—on All-hallow eve. Why! that is——" he stopped. Something kept him from finishing his sentence, "the same night you came here!"

There had been so much of mystery about her. Sometimes she was merry and carefree, at other times morose or lost in thought from which he could not rouse her. But never one word, one clue, had she given him concerning her former associations. Boyan did not even know his guest's name. And now, this strange coincidence!

He thought of the belt of bullets he had found strapped over her shoulder. He had thrown them away, but the memory of them remained, disconcerting. Tosho had said that deserting soldiers were the thieves. Still the strange association lingered; she had been so intensely interested.

The girl handed him a pail.

"Go for water," she commanded almost harshly. "I shall get dinner ready."

She limped here and there, storing the provisions in safe nooks. He had quite forgotten the surprise he had planned for her with the milk. She evidently accepted

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it as a matter of course and put the jug outside in a cool corner between mossy stones. When he remembered, it did not seem to matter any more.

Neither spoke during the preparations. He gave little help, but watched her as she hurried here and there.

"It is ready," she said shortly, and they seated themselves before the stone table. But no merry conversation ensued; even their hunger seemed to have vanished, and once or twice she shivered when a cold draft came in the opening.

When they had finished, he piled the wood high on the fire and spread a blanket for her to lie upon. She was very restless and nervous. There were a few moments of silence as they sat before the fire. Then she propped her head on her hand and said,

"You have never asked what brought me here."

He did not answer, but watched the flames curling over the pine bark.

"So I am going to tell you," she finished.

CHAPTER X

THE MAKING OF A JOAN OF ARC

"MY MOTHER was a very young woman and I remember thinking she was the most beautiful woman in the world. Father was much older. He had come to our Pirin village from somewhere in Southern Macedonia, where he had fought in a revolt against the Turks and had to run away. He married my mother before he had been in Tetino more than a year. They loved each other desperately, and our home was a nest of joy.

"There were no Turks in Tetino then; not until I was about six did they begin coming up to the village. Then a garrison was established to control the mountain passes of the Struma near by. After that we were never without fear.

"My father knew them and scarcely ever left mother and me alone. He added another layer of stones to the house-wall; I was forbidden to go outside the courtyard. It was very lonely and tedious after having been used to playing in the fields and on the mountainside. The word 'Turk' couched more terror for me than all the ghosts and goblins of childland.

"When I was seven, my brother was born. They were all so proud of the little fellow that I began to feel neglected and lonelier than ever. One afternoon, while my mother was still weak, the court became unendurable; I slipped through the gate and ran out to my old playground. It was deserted, but the childish intoxication of unrestraint was upon me. I ran on and on, farther and farther from home, touching the leaves, the flowers, rubbing my face against the trees in utter delight.

"It was getting late, however, and I knew my father would soon be back from the fields. I began retracing my steps down the hillside. There was a fork in the road about half-way home; just before I reached it, I heard loud singing and laughter. I can feel yet how my heart beat; a group of Turkish soldiers were coming down the road. I would have hidden in the bushes, but it was too late. Already one of them had caught sight of me.

" 'Hello, here's a bouncing one out for an afternoon jaunt. Whither art skipping, little squirrel?'

"The words and laugh paralyzed me. My knees grew stiff; my feet felt rooted. I stood and stared in terror. The Turk drew nearer."

The hermit stirred uneasily. He muttered something; the girl wondered if it was a prayer.

" 'Have you lost your tongue, little one?' the Turk continued. 'Haven't seen a handsome gentleman like me before, have you?' and he started to pinch my cheek.

"The touch of his hand broke the spell. I dodged and ran at full speed down the road.

" 'Ho, ho,' he shouted, 'watch the little chipmunk run!'

"Whether he followed I do not know, but I heard one of the others call out:

" 'Don't rob the cradle, Salih Effendi. Save her for another year.'

"Breathless, gasping, I rushed into our kitchen, where mother was chatting with old Donna, who helped with the work. I threw myself in her arms and sobbed out the whole story. Mother clasped me in despair; old Donna came and bent over us both.

"There was no light except from the fireplace and it flickered hideously over Donna's withered, distorted face. She touched a deep scar that disfigured her mouth and one side of her face.

" 'I have told you before, Petra, this is

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the only way out of it,' she said to my mother. 'She is far too beautiful to escape the jackals.'

"Mother pushed her away and clasped me more closely, crying my name over and over, caressing me as she had not done for months. I could not understand, but I clung to her and grew quieter. I was asleep when my father entered.

"For weeks after that mother often called me to her and fondled me and studied my face for hours. Sometimes she would stand me before the mirror, crying,

" 'Look at yourself, Adalena! Look at yourself and never forget how beautiful you were.'

"And I stared at my face in the glass and could not understand what it was all about.

"During these days the American missionaries were covering the Pirin villages. They often stopped at our house to leave tracts, take dinner, or buy oats for their horses, and, though father was friendly to them, he never encouraged their hints to hold a prayer-meeting at Tetino.

"I think father would have made a poor proselyte, Boyan, as would most of our Macedonians. It was the intangible self-respect of the missionaries that fascinated him. Their eyes lacked the hunted look; their shoulders, their bearing, all breathed an atmosphere of fields unfenced, unravaged, broad, free. The American women, too, looked one straight in the face and didn't keep turning around to see who followed.

"This strange air of freedom lingered in our home even after they rode away, until the sound of some soldier Turk dispelled the illusion. Yet every time they came they left my father gloomier. He would look at their vanishing horses and would shake his fist at something that seemed to defy him. Was the American God a different one from Him who had so forgotten our Macedonian land in His accounts?

"I don't know what father thought about God, but the candle before our Virgin stopped burning, and even the Easter mass could not draw him to church. Mother watched father's deepening gloom and she hated the missionaries for disturbing our predestined lot of misery with visions of freedom and joy.

"One day mother clung to me more than usual. I had heard father tell her to keep closely inside; a new detachment of bashi-bazouks had just entered the village. When he went toward the street, she called him back and had him kiss me twice. Then she led me into the kitchen. Donna was there, her old face more distorted than ever. She stood near the table, which was drawn up before the window, and I saw a long, sharp knife in her hands.

" 'Come here, little lovely one,' she cried, 'we'll fix you safe from the bazouks. They won't care to touch our girl when old Donna is through.'

"Mother lifted me on the table and for a while almost smothered me with kisses, while the tears soaked the neck of my dress. Then she pushed me back, looked at me steadily an endless time, so it seemed to me, and flung herself face downward on the floor in front of the fireplace.

"I looked wonderingly from her to Donna. The old woman pulled me to her. I felt no fear; Donna had been like a second mother to me and I loved her in spite of her hideousness. She felt of my face-muscles carefully, muttering all the while:

" 'Donna will fix her girl—just as Donna's mother did for her. The Turkish dogs pick out the pretty girls first.'

"She lifted the knife and drew the back of the blade across my face. The cold of the steel frightened me; I jerked back quickly and cried out. She snatched up the knife. Her eyes gleamed red; she grabbed for me. I screamed in terror, but her grip was relentless. The knife descended. I shut my eyes.

"Some one snatched me from behind, but not before the hard steel had cut into my cheek. The wife of the missionary had entered the open door just in time. Donna's slash had missed its aim and a mere cut was the result; but I thought I was being killed, and kicked and screamed in the missionary's arms.

"WHEN I remember next, the American lady was quieting me with cold water and wiping the blood away. My mother lay motionless before the fireplace. Donna was gone. I never saw her again.

"It was hours before order was restored. Mother was weak and helpless. The good woman who had saved me volunteered to stay with us for several days, and while she was there mother explained to her the whole story.

"It is an old device, you know, and not

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uncommon even in these days, to save the beautiful daughters from Turkish lust by slashing their faces into hideous ugliness. Boyan, Boyan, only in our songs do we in Macedonia dream of beauty; in actual life beauty is a curse to a woman. The American lady was beautiful; her mother had cherished and nourished beauty as a woman's treasure. Our mothers extinguish its first awakening, for only the repulsive face is safe; honor is enough for a Macedonian.

"The missionary told us of her school for girls. She offered to take me back with her and care for me there. She would see that I was well educated; perhaps I might become a great teacher. My mother and father debated long, but at last I went away."

Adalena changed her position until she could put her chin on both hands, and looked dreamily in the fire.

"The next five years I was gaily, carelessly happy. The missionaries had one child, a girl near my own age, who had just returned from a visit to America, and to her every hero and heroine in all history was an American. I remember once she told me of a wondrous woman who had led whole armies in a revolution against England——how she had finally elected George Washington for President, and so angered the British that they burned her—'burned her just like a chunk of wood,' Annie would end, shivering with horror.

" 'But how could they,' I asked one day, 'when she was an American? Did they dare burn an American, those British Turks?'

" 'Well, you see,' Annie answered confidently, 'she wasn't a naturalized citizen, but only born there. You can't understand these things, but you would if you were an American.'

"And that was my first introduction to Joan of Arc. It made a great impression on me; I used to dream of her at night leading armies to victory and freeing the whole people. I would waken in the morning, trembling with excitement, and spend the day enveloped in my dream, thinking, wishing, hoping I too could be some such woman.

"I was in the school yard one day in the summer of my twelfth year when Annie came rushing to me.

" 'Adalena, Adalena,' she cried, 'Mother wants you. Father is going over the mountains and will take you to see your parents in Tetino.'

CHAPTER XI

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE

"IT WAS a hot, sultry evening when we approached Tetino. I could scarcely restrain my eagerness. How glad my parents would be! What a rollicking boy I expected to find in my brother!

"The missionary whipped up and we drove at top speed to my father's house near the outskirts of the village. It was still smoking.

"I jumped from the carriage, crying out my father's name. The missionary tried to restrain me; he saw a man sitting on a stone in the desolate courtyard, mumbling to himself:

" 'They have taken them all—my precious ones. The Turks have taken them all.'

" 'It is grandfather Tasko,' I cried, 'my mother's father!'

"I clasped his knees, begging him to tell me where my parents and my brother were. He did not recognize me, seeming only bothered, and mumbled on:

" 'The little boy, they beat his brains out against a tree. My Petra, my beautiful one, they carried away. The strong husband was not there, and old Tasko is very weak; he could not strike. They are gone. The Turks have taken them all.'

" 'But, grandfather,' I begged, 'where did they take my mother, Petra?'

" 'Yes, Petra, Petra! Next day at the foot of the cliff lies Petra, cold. I buried my girl. Old Tasko can't save. He digs graves Dig one for himself.'

"He shook his head and took up his wild recitative. We put him in the buggy and drove as fast as we could to a shepherd's cabin up the mountain-trail. There we learned the details of the massacre.

"My father had been suspected and fled to the mountains, planning to return that night for his wife and boy; but the Turks let loose their passions in the afternoon, and a general massacre followed. The shepherd had heard that my father had gone to Sofia.

"Grandfather Tasko died that night, and the next day we went back to the mission. I stayed on until I was seventeen.

"There was to be a great missionary conference at Sofia that year, and a company were going from the school. I begged to

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join them, but it was no religious zeal that urged me. I had two ambitions: to find my father and to avenge the death of my mother and brother.

"The meetings were devout enough, but continual prayer and thanksgiving oppressed me. I felt no fear in Bulgaria's capital; I had not seen a Turk since I came.

"It was a night of special prayer for Macedonia, and I could not bear the petitions any more. 'It is not enough to say Our Father, one must also say Amen,' you know. I said my Amen, and slipped into the street. A wandering spirit came over me. The streets bristled with jostling throngs. I had never seen such multitudes before. Was my father somewhere in this aimless throng? Hoping against hope I stared at the faces hurrying past. The fantom chase led me on from street to street, until the large plate windows of a café flashed before my eyes, where men and women sat at small tables, chatting and laughing.

"At a table for four, drawn in a corner apart from the others, a heavy-bearded man discoursed earnestly with two young fellows. His flashing eyes as he addressed now one, now the other, caught my attention, held it. I pressed my face against the glass. Ten years had not made me forget that face. I rushed in wildly and threw my arms in mad joy about my father's neck."

The girl leaned against the wall and clasped one knee with her hands.

"The rest is recent history," she said. "Father was planning a great Macedonian uprising. He would go from village to village preaching revolt until all Macedonia was ready for freedom; then strike one concerted blow. I did not go back to the missionary school.

"We went together on our mission. For two years we traveled up and down the Bulgarian regions of Macedonia: from Uskub to Monastir, from Salonica to Kirk-Kilisseh. Everywhere Bulgars suffered, everywhere dreamed of liberty, but there was no united effort, no organization. A leader was their great need, and my father became that leader.

"You would think it glorious work? Yes, but it was hard, wearying work, too, Boyan. Up in their mountain nests the brigand *waywodes* roamed free, defying Turkish tyranny, like untamed eagles of the Macedonian wilds. But we had to move under the very nose of the Turk; in plain and valley we crawled from village to village organizing the peasantry against the great day. My father's heart burned within him when he witnessed Moslem outrages, but he checked reprisals; his one passion was to prepare the masses for the one final revolution that was the dream of his life. To that he sacrificed all. His own life he counted for nothing. He was only a torch, he said, carrying the flame abroad; some day he would burn out.

"One night the district leaders held a conference in one of the Monastir villages. I could not go, but waited long in a mountain-hut for father's return. He never came, nor did any of the others. We found their mutilated bodies the next morning. The Turks had discovered the assembly.

"Since then I have taken up my father's work. It must succeed, Boyan. The struggle is inevitable; it must find us ready. The peasantry would lay down their lives to a man, but they do not know *how*. They need a leader. I do all I can, but after all I am a woman, though but few in Macedonia know it."

She stopped and looked at him intently. Appealing admiration glowed in her eyes as she gazed at the massively built frame of him; the muscular, masterful shoulders, which no cassock could utterly conceal, the tense features, the eyes that looked far away. She had felt their compelling fire. What unspoken, unrequited agonies burned beneath this hermit's hood; were they the immemorial agonies of Macedonia? He was lost in thought; she gazed, waited, hoped. At last he spoke:

"What can all your peasantry do against the uncounted soldiers of the Sultan? They come and come and there is no end to their coming. You and your comrades are like children trying to dam the sea with pebbles. The first tide sweeps your labors away."

"Let it well sweep! Others will come, and others—and oh, Boyan! if we can not dam that tide, then let it sweep us away! We can not rest idly and watch—we can not, and you can not!"

He smiled bitterly. "It sweeps you away in new tides of blood—and every to-morrow is worse than the yesterday. Of what avail are groans for liberty? The peasants have no money, and bare fingers are not rifles."

Adalena lowered her voice to a whisper.

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"True," she answered. "Still—there is some money. Two hundred thousand piasters will buy many rifles."

He sprang to his feet. Two hundred thousand piasters!

"SO IT was you! You, a woman, and peasant lads who robbed Murad Pasha's tax-wagon and killed his soldiers!"

Her eyes flamed dangerously.

"Robbed!" she cried. "What have we done but tried to give back to the people what is their own? Call Murad Pasha a robber, a murderer, if you will, but not us who would kill a dozen leeches to save a thousand children of misery. This money is for arms, Boyan, saved against the day of wrath, when a thousand men in a mountain pass may turn the balance against the Turk."

"But this is all dreaming. It has been dreamed a hundred times." He waved an impatient hand. "After all, there is no organization."

"There is organization," she protested, "crude but growing."

She sprang to his side and caught his arm. "Boyan," she pleaded, "we need a leader. I have watched you. Will you come?"

"I?" he cried in surprise. "What do you ask? I am only a hermit; I have given my life to God and to peace."

"God! Let God live with the gods. Man must live with men. What does your life amount to? What right have you to eat even Tosho's dried onions? What avails it if you kneel all day before that,"—she pointed to the candle-lighted Virgin—"when men are slaughtered and women ruined all about you, and you do not raise your finger?"

He shook her off. "You slander what is holy," he said bitterly. "Yours is not the only story; I too have suffered, lost all in Turkish massacres, but I saw it was no use. I came here to seek peace and freedom. I had it—till you came."

"And you mean to stay here? Do nothing but pray and chatter your teeth through saintly disciplines?"

"It brings me peace. In the name of freedom, you incite both Bulgar and Turk, and only fresh massacres follow."

"So this is your answer? This is all you will do?"

"You and your peasants have tried only one way; I have tried both; tried and failed."

She threw back her head; her eyes flashed fire and her lips trembled.

"It is only a cassock and hood," she said. "I thought I had found a man."

The curtains swept about her. She threw herself on the couch of pine needles and the blankets swayed together. Boyan stared at them speechless. Never had he seen a woman so magnificent, never had he been cut so deeply. He clenched his fist and stood rigid, his lips working.

The November night wind whistled weirdly about the cave; ghostly cadences rustled through the trees. The dying coals flickered one by one and went out. After a long time Boyan relaxed; he raked together the few remaining embers and made ready for the night. His muscles ached and he moved very slowly.

"Yet I was right, I am right," he kept murmuring to himself as he rolled himself in his blanket. "It is useless, firebrand work. A fool can throw a stone into the sea, but a hundred wise men can not pull it out."

But he could not bring himself to approach the Virgin and Child.

Broad daylight wakened him, and he stretched himself comfortably. He felt confused. It seemed as if something disastrous had happened. Gradually he awakened enough to remember detail after detail of the past night. She had left him in anger; perhaps the day would bring a more rational mood.

Evidently Adalena was still asleep. He sprang up and hurried to prepare breakfast; he would surprise her when she came out. It was soon ready, and he called softly. He craved to speak aloud the name he had learned only the night before, but his lips would not frame the sounds.

There was no response to his summons. He waited until the breakfast grew cold. Still she did not appear. The silence in the cave was death-like. It chilled Boyan. It had never been so still before, not even when he was alone. He held his breath to listen: not the faintest whisper of a sound could he hear.

Timidly at first, then emboldened by anxiety, he approached the curtaining blankets. He listened again, and pushed them back. The place was empty; her hood and cassock gone. He caught hold of the curtains and buried his face in his arm. The truth he

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had been suppressing for days shouted itself in his ears.

"Adalena," he whispered, "I love you, love you."

His weight was too much for the partition. The blankets fell about his feet, leaving the cave barer and more comfortless than ever.

CHAPTER XII

DULGOKOSSA

THE fitful flame played about the fresh sticks of wood as Dobry tossed them on to the glowing coals of the studio fireplace. The hours wore away—midnight and past—when suddenly he straightened up, alert. The frost on the paving-stones outside creaked lightly. He stole over to the small window to listen and had just put his ear to the pane, when a handful of dirt rattled against it and a stick knocked on the wall: once, twice, thrice, very rapid and short strokes, then a long, hard beat as if the stick rubbed against the stones. He started. It was the knock of the Goreno comrades.

He could see nothing and waited in silence. The rapping came again, this time more insistent and somewhat different; a long, two short, and another long stroke. Dobry went down, turned the key, and opened the street door. In the light of a dying moon a monk-clad figure stood silhouetted.

"Dobry?" the voice was low.

"Well, by my icon-brushes, is it, your Holiness? In with you, brother, and toast your shins a bit. The fire is as good as if you were expected."

The guest stole past him, climbed to the balcony, and entered the studio. He appropriated Dobry's armchair and stretched his feet toward the friendly warmth. Dobry noticed that the monk seemed lame.

"I heard rumors and couldn't stay away any longer," his Holiness began. "Would have come sooner, but the bullet I tried to stop with my knee that night has kept me laid up."

"You were hurt? We feared as much; we accounted for every one except you. Where did you vanish? You look pretty well fed."

"Not very far coming, but a long way going back," the monk answered. "Now what of the Cause, Dobry? I have come to hear everything. To-morrow I start for Uskub. I had hoped to take a comrade with me, but it is not to be this time."

"Wish I could go," Dobry said regretfully, throwing his arm about the monk's shoulder. "But we here in Goreno need all the wits we have for the next few days. Ivan the huntsman sent me a messenger the other day asking about you; they have already started a good share of the money on its way to Bulgaria. It will bring rifles and ammunition to the comrades in Goreno and also to the villages where Ivan's lads come from. The rest goes to the Cause at large."

"Good," the monk muttered.

"But Stavry the money-lender has caught on."

The monk nodded. "How much does he suspect?"

"By putting two and two together, he has just about the whole plot. He tried to threaten Tosho first, and promised to keep still if he got a share of the money; but Tosho, knowing nothing of course, backed the old vulture out with his fist. Then he came straight to me and put the same proposition, and I wasn't quick enough to throw him off the track. I told him to give me a few days to think it over."

"And if you give him the money?" The monk's face was set.

"It may quiet him for a while, but we'll never be sure. The simple truth is, the devil has the grip on us."

"How do you propose to tie his tongue?"

DOBRY shook his head. There was a long silence. The monk's heart beat until it seemed to shake the robe. At last:

"There is one sort of man who never tells tales."

Dobry looked up in quick surprise, then shuddered at what he read in the young face.

"You mean——? Surely you can not—— To kill a Bulgar?"

"I would have killed my own father had he proved traitor to the Cause. It is the Cause alone that counts. Dobry, the life of Stavry the money-lender is only one against thousands, which his treachery imperils."

The monk pushed back the armchair and leaned over the painter, pressing his shoulders firmly with both hands.

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"It is time for you to know. Look at me! Look closely. Am I——?" There was a quick, violent shake of the head. The cap fell back to the shoulders, and over it two long braids of black hair.

"*Dulgokossa*!" Dobry cried, springing to his feet and catching her hand.

"You know me then?"

"Know you? I have dreamed of you night and day. My father told me of you; that some day you would come to us."

"I know. You have the name from him. He always called me The Long-Haired One. Your father and mine worked together until the end. One time he said to me: 'You will come to us some time, *Dulgokossa*, thou Long-Haired One, and you will point out the way to our lads.' Our fathers have gone; are we to carry on their work?"

"To the last drop of our blood," Dobry answered. "Tell me what to do."

She looked steadily into his eyes.

"Dobry, the Cause demands it of you. Stavry must be killed."

He met her eyes squarely, then he put his hand in hers. It trembled, but his eyes did not waver.

"It shall be as you say, Adalena. When?"

"To-morrow night?" she asked impatiently. "Every hour's delay may prove fatal."

"To-morrow night, then," he answered. "I think it will not be hard. He lives with his two sons and an old housekeeper who is deaf. I heard him say the boys are out of town. Where can I send you news of the result?"

"I shall go back whence I came," the girl replied. "Follow the upland path to the left from Uncle Tosho's sheds, clear up to the highest point. Just before you reach the top of the El Tepe cliff-trail, turn into a goat path that starts from a thrice-blazed *mura*-tree. It leads straight to the cave of Boyan the hermit, where I have been staying. He has been like a—father to me. Let me know by twelve o'clock. After that I must leave. It is late already for the Uskub meeting, but I shall wait until twelve."

"I shall come myself if I can," Dobry answered. "But if that is impossible, then Mirko shall carry an icon. One of the Virgin all in blue with a cloudless sky for a background, and all is well. The other, it shall be vivid enough to let you know how things have gone."

The night-sky was turning to soft gray. Adalena tucked up her braids and pulled the cap far over her head.

"If anything delays you," she said, "leave the icon with the hermit. I may get the news more quickly."

"Does he know? Will be understand?"

"He knows all he needs to know."

She drew a dagger from her belt and held it in her left hand. Her right she laid on the blade.

"Once more, Dobry," she said.

He put his hand on hers, and together they repeated the oath of undying allegiance: "*While powder burns and blood doth flow*——"

She was calm and cool, but when he drew his hand away, molten fire was coursing through his veins. She put the dagger in place and went to the door. He wracked his brain for a pretext to detain her, but could invent none. A shyness, almost timidity, such as he had never known before, kept him silent.

She smiled, nodded good-by, and went away as quietly as she had come.

CHAPTER XIII

DOBRY GOES FORTH

DOBRY threw down his paint-brushes and pushed his chair away from his easel.

"I guess she will understand this message, if I fail," he murmured, surveying the canvas with grim satisfaction. "But will she ever know——?"

He stopped, walked over to the window, and gazed down the courtyard, bathed in the hazy twilight of early even.

"If I fail, she need never know," he finished.

From a drawer near the divan he extracted a portfolio of early sketches—youthful visions of the Fantom Princess, half-caught adolescent dreams which he was too shy to show to any one. He looked them over wistfully. Perhaps some day he would show them to her.

Some day—when Macedonia would be free! But in the meantime death was the task allotted him, not love.

He realized it was growing dark very fast, and his plans for the night were still indefinite. He pushed the sketches aside and paced up and down the room, lost in tense speculation.

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"Do-*bryl*" Mirko's complaining, insistent voice roused him from his brown study. "Dobry, *Bati* Dobry, why don't you open? Aunt Zora says suppper will soon be too cold for pigs to eat."

Dobry unlocked the door.

"All right, little fellow," he said kindly. "And, Mirko, after supper I have something to tell you that is very important; but you must eat your supper without asking one single question about it."

The twelve-year-old nodded sagely.

"I understand, *Bati* Dobry," he answered, and snuggled importantly against his brother. "Aunt Zora is a fine woman of course, but we men can't trust everybody with our secrets, can we?"

It was late in the evening when Dobry returned to the studio. His step was certain now; brisk, direct, determined. He looked over his tools of death once more before setting out—the long dagger with the wavy double edge, shining, eager, pitilessly ready. He pressed his thumb against both edges; the steel was chilly to the touch and razor-sharp. He laid it aside with a grunt of satisfaction, and felt of his revolver. The six fatal messengers grinned leaden death at him.

"The steel first if I can—the less noise the better. But you may get your chance, sonnies,"—he caressed the dull leaden fingers—"you may get your chance. And if you too fail, why then, good, fat brother, you will serve us all!"

Out of a small box he took a round iron bomb, wrapped in cotton swathings; made sure of the fuse, and deposited it in the folds of his dark red sash. Revolver and knife followed after it. He drew the blade again and again to make sure it would obey the slightest move of his hand, then he put out the light and stole quietly along the balcony corridor. The boards creaked in protest. Dobry moved still more stealthily.

He stopped for a moment before the window of Mirko's tiny bedroom.

"I ought to have told him more," Dobry thought. "Still, when he gets older he will fight. It is in his blood. He knows enough to tell Adalena of—of whatever does come out!"

HE GAINED the street without attracting any notice. The town was dark. Only an occasional lantern or window-light broke in on the creepy night. Goreno men knew enough to keep themselves under lock and key after sundown.

But if the town was dark, it was by no means silent. The streets rang with the ribald songs of soldiers and *zaptiehs*, carousing, Dobry surmised, in Papaz Effendi's tavern. He met few owls. One, a Turk, swore at him; another wished him good health in frightened Bulgarian. Dobry answered neither, and moved on briskly, silently, like a man who was going somewhere.

Stavry's house was in the older section of Goreno, in a narrow little street jutting off the market-place. Dobry avoided crossing the square, lighted by the lurid translucence of dirty tavern windows; he slipped along tortuous byways into the narrow passage, scarcely more than an alley, and groped his way carefully to the doorway. The first floor was given over to the cheese and olive-oil shop which served the main purposes of a usurer's bank for the peasants of the Goreno region. The living-rooms were directly above.

A light still burned in the room nearest the stairway.

"The old scoundrel is up, anyway," Dobry thought. "That may make things easier."

He stepped into a deeper shadow to reconnoiter and form some definite plan of action.

A revulsion against the deed came over him. To kill a Bulgar in cold blood, even for Macedonia—— "If there only were some other way," he murmured. "If one could silence his tongue somehow. Ugh!" he swore impatiently, "there is only one way to be rid of cockroaches."

He left his hiding-place in the shadow of the house across the street, stepped boldly to the gate, and pounded the heavy knocker. He heard a chair pushed back, then Stavry's uneven stumping back and forth over the bare floor of the room above. From a window that opened overhead, the intruder heard in harsh, sleepy tones:

"Who's there?"

In answer Dobry gave a signal-knock. The limping thump descended the stairs, a key turned, and the door swung open, slowly, cautiously.

"It is Dobry," the guest said, pushing his way into the hall. "I've come to talk things over, Stavry."

Stavry put his sour, wrinkled face close to the youth's and peered keenly up at him.

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But the hall was dark, lighted only by a candle flickering in its socket at the head of the stairway. Dobry kicked the door shut and started up-stairs.

An uneasiness troubled his host. "It is almost bedtime, Dobry," he complained. "Couldn't you wait until morning?"

"We have slept long enough," Dobry answered shortly. "Macedonia knows no morning."

Stavry was forced to follow him to the upper room.

Dobry glanced about quickly as he entered. It was a bare place—a veritable miser's den. Except for some trash piled in a dusty heap in a corner, only a rough table, a few chairs, and an old tin stove covered the carpetless floor. A door opposite opened into Stavry's sleeping-room, barer if possible than the living-room. Behind these two, Dobry knew, were the housekeeper's rooms, the kitchen, and the sleeping-places of Stavry's two sons.

Dobry could hear no one moving. Stavry was evidently alone. The visitor threw himself on a chair by the table and leaned his head on one hand, shading his face from the candle that sputtered in the center of the table.

"Now let's get the straight of that little business you came to see me about, Stavry," he began. Then he checked himself: "Are we alone?"

"All alone," Stavry assured him. "Martha has been snoring this long time."

"And the boys?"

"They went over to Salonica," Stavry answered glibly.

"Is that so? It is quite a journey."

Dobry breathed more freely. The dirty, greedy, hawk-like face before him sickened him.

"There is no use beating around the bush about it," he began. "You do know all about our plans."

Stavry chuckled. "There are not many layers of wool over these eyes, my lad."

Dobry flushed. "They are blind eyes, Graybeard," he retorted, "if they can not see that the money is not for our own use. Don't you see? The revolution when it comes must find us ready. We need every piaster for arms if we are ever to win."

"Come, come, tell that to some ballad singing moon-face who is in love," Stavry sneered. "A man like Croom Dobreff, without an extra shirt to put on his back, isn't going to hoard that two hundred thousand and buy gunpowder with it."

"Hoard! Why, old fellow, not one piaster of that money has ever reached Goreno. It has all gone where it is needed for the Great Cause."

"Great fiddlesticks!" Stavry scoffed. "What is the use of talking? You can make all the declamations about freedom you please, but I know one Murad Pasha who would pay well for the story of the Krividol Gulch."

"Yes," Dobry hissed, "and squeeze it afterward from you and from all of us!"

"Oh, I'll look after my interests, never worry," Stavry answered placidly. "I shall get what I deserve!"

"Then take it now, you stinking cockroach!" Dobry grasped the old man's throat and threw him backward. The miser's chair fell over with a crash and the two men rolled on the floor.

STAVRY saw the knife gleaming, seeking a place to strike. He wrestled like an eel, pressing closely against his opponent. He was lame, but his muscles were hard, wiry. Try as he might, Dobry could not drive home his thrust.

Suddenly Stavry's left arm shot out; he grasped the knife-handle and wrenched it from the youth's grasp. It went spinning across the room, burying itself in the boards of the opposite wall. Dobry as quickly drew his revolver from his belt. His fingers sought the trigger. Stavry's eyes popped out of their sockets in the face of this new peril.

Some one grasped Dobry from behind and jerked his arm upward. The building shook with the shot: the bullet crashed through the ceiling. A sudden impact from the side sent the icon-painter reeling to the floor, and Stavry clambered to his feet. His eldest son held the icon-painter firmly; his younger pushed open the window, shouting blood and murder.

Doors banged, opened; soldiers from a near-by tavern rushed in, ready for any sort of a riot.

"It is Dobry the iconograph," a grizzly-faced villager gasped, pushing forward curiously. "What's been going on here, Stavry?"

The old man leaned heavily on the table, rubbing his throat, which was blue with

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thumb-prints, and trying to collect his wits.

"He's a murderer and a thief," he cried, his voice high and nervous. "Out with him! Out with all of you! Away to the Pasha! Here's the man who can tell where the tax-money went."

"What's this?" Jemil Effendi exclaimed suddenly, shoving his way forward. "I guess this matter belongs to us."

The villagers slunk out of the room at the first opportunity, and the soldiers fell back talking excitedly. Stavry's sons turned to their father. Left free for a moment, Dobry struck a sulfur match and applied it to the black fuse projecting from his dark red sash. Stavry kept on explaining:

"He had come to murder me, Jemil Effendi, because I am a loyal subject of Murad Pasha and because I found out who robbed the tax-wagon."

"Tie up the cur!" the Turk shouted, "and off to the *konak!*"

Two *zaptiehs* made for Dobry; but the icon-painter was already up, smiling contemptuously.

"Hold on, friends," he sang out to them, "Don't trouble yourselves. We'll all go in a minute!"

The shining sphere of death spluttered in his hand; the Turks gazed at the short, curly tail fascinated, paralyzed with terror, unable to move. Stavry's sons crossed themselves tremblingly, but the old money-lender burst out with an oath and grabbed for the fast-vanishing fuse.

"It is yours," Dobry cried, and glancing at the bomb to make sure, he hurled it at Stavry's feet.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RED SAINT GEORGE

THE next morning in the studio Mirko watched the clock nervously. His brother had told him to wait until half-past eight, then take the fiery red icon of Saint George up to the cell of the hermit.

He had never been there. It must be a long, lonesome climb, and what couldn't that hermit do to him, up there in the cave, or perhaps Turkish soldiers somewhere on the way! Still, he had to go; Dobry had said that the holy man could pray Mirko's soul straight to hell if he disobeyed. So the twelve-year-old waited, hoping every minute to hear Dobry's footsteps.

He unrolled the icon once more, and shivered as he looked at it. It was the oddest Saint George ever painted. Instead of the writhing dragon swallowing the gallant saint's lance in orthodox style, it had thrown itself across the horse, and the knight lay on the ground torn by the monster's talons. Only the little princess was the same, running in terror along the cliff. Mirko was always fond of watching his brother's princesses in their escape. Whatever would happen to this one, now that Saint George himself had been killed?

A quarter-past eight. The lad rolled up the picture and waited, cap in hand. The house was very still. Aunt Zora had gone to the market, and their servant girl was busy across the court.

Mirko listened. Yes, the street gate had swung open; some one was coming up. Hurried steps shook the balcony, nearer, nearer. Dobry had come at last! Mirko sprang to the door in relief, threw it open—and rushed against a Turkish *zaptieh.* Four others followed close behind. The man threw the boy against the door-jamb and pushed into the room.

The lad clutched his icon closely and rolled out of the way. Behind the table he scrambled to his feet, glaring hatred and defiance at the Turks. They were ransacking every nook and corner of the studio, jerking the pictures from the walls and ripping the carpets off the floor; but the search was fruitless.

"Where's the little pup we met at the door?" the leader cried. "I'll wager he could tell us where the papers are."

"I can't!" Mirko cried stoutly. "I don't know anything about anything."

"Don't play that game, sonny."

Tossun Effendi switched him into the corner of the room.

"Maybe this will help you remember."

The second blow sent the lad reeling.

"But I don't, Effendi," Mirko gasped, choking his tears. "Dobry never lets me see things."

One of the *zaptiehs* had been tossing the pictures broadcast into the river. He exclaimed quickly.

"Hey, keep the pup. We'll use him later. Here we are!"

He held up a small water-color, painted on heavy paper. Running his finger along

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the edge, he ripped a second sheet off the back, so neatly pasted as to be almost invisible.

"Just happened to feel it," he exclaimed triumphantly.

The others rushed to his side: several closely written sheets and a drawing, evidently a map, were in the pocket.

"Look here, bub," the Effendi called, "what's this little picture we have found?"

Mirko wiped his eyes on his coat-sleeve and looked at the paper.

"I don't know," he said, dodging quickly.

Tossun Effendi unsheathed his keen-edged *yataghan*. He stropped it once or twice on his greasy pantaloon and ran the cold steel lightly across the middle of the boy's head.

"Do you know what we do with stubborn little warts? We slice them down fine, and then—zip, off they go!"

He let the sharp point travel down the lad's spine, pressing just hard enough to cut his jacket. The boy screamed in terror and grabbed the Turk's arm.

"Effendi, don't—don't!" he shrieked.

"Do you think you know any better now? Look closely."

Mirko stared tremblingly at the paper. Finally he answered:

"It's a—a picture of the Krividol Gulch."

"Told you so!" Tossun exclaimed.

The Turks crowded eagerly. There was a long line, evidently the road, then various zigzags here and there, some ink-splotches, but no writing of any sort.

"WHO drew it?" the Turk demanded. The boy's tears were dry. He was stubbornly silent.

"All right!" The Turk began whetting his knife again. The child watched it gleam against the dirty pantaloon. He pressed his lips together closely. This time he would not tell.

"One, two," the Turk began. He pressed the blade on the boy's head, harder, harder. Mirko felt a sharp pain. He threw himself on the floor, grasping the officer's knees.

"Please, please, Effendi!" he sobbed. "It was not—it was—Dobry." The Effendi had to stoop to hear the name.

"All right, pup," he said pushing him off with his foot, "we shall not slice you this time, but your wits must be quicker hereafter."

"But where's my brother?" the lad begged. "Where is he?"

"Your brother? Well," Tossun began, but a nudge from one of the *zaptiehs* made him change his mind. He laughed into the boy's frightened eyes. "Your brother has gone all to pieces on account of this Krividol Gulch robbery, pup. He'll need to be put together again. Unless you tell us all about him, some devils will have no end of fun with him."

"Something like this, you know." One of the men caught the lad by the foot. "They'll try to find out how he is screwed together."

He began to twist the boy's foot and leg. The child cried out again and kicked violently. The others laughed and the man let go.

Mirko staggered to his feet.

"But where is he now?" he persisted.

"I really don't know where all of him is," Tossun laughed. "If he were a Turk I could tell you." Still Mirko did not understand the ghastly truth.

"I don't see why the devils should torture my brother so," he sobbed. "He is not half as much to blame as that monk, his Holiness with the long name."

"Ho, ho! What's this? Maybe this little muskrat knows more than we think. What monk is it, bub?"

The twelve-year-old brain brimmed with a sudden idea.

"What will you do if I tell you? Will you let my brother come back?"

The officer considered, grinning at his companions. "Well now, I am not sure but that we would. In fact, I am quite sure the Pasha would be glad to exchange the monk, or anybody in fact, for your brother. The Pasha was fond of your brother, you know."

Mirko crept under the table and fished out his icon.

"See," he cried, "I was to take this to the monk up in his cave, if Dobry did not come back. I don't know where the cave is, but Dobry told me, it is up——"

"Look here, *zaptieh*," the officer interrupted, handing the papers over to one of the men, "take these to Murad Pasha. I'll get some help and we shall all go with the youngster. I believe we are going to catch the real gander this time. Now, sonny, lead on."

"But are you sure?" Mirko urged. "Will

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you let my brother free as soon as we get back?"

"He'll be toasting his shins right in this room half an hour after we get to Goreno with your monk," Tossun assured him. "But if you don't lead us right—" he took hold of the boy's head and spoke through gritted teeth—"we'll cut Dobry's head right straight off."

"Come along, come quickly!" A *zaptieh* pinched Mirko. The child grabbed his cap and ran along the balcony. The others followed rapidly. It seemed to Mirko that the Turks were very slow climbers as he hurried ahead up the mountain trail.

CHAPTER XV

THE HERMIT ANSWERS

THE day had been one of fasting but not of prayer for Boyan the hermit. The wild, lonely cave that had charmed him before was oppressive beyond endurance. He wandered into the woods; a deep snow had fallen during the night and covered every trace of Autumn. In the Summer he always looked forward eagerly to the coming of the snow. He had symbolized it as a purging of the forest; now it was like a shroud.

He climbed to the topmost summit of the mountain where the crest stood out, bald above the pines. The wind swept about him and waved through his thin cassock. All around peak rose upon peak. Elusive giants' hoods of impalpable snow mists they seemed to him; serene, cold, apathetic. Along the lower mountain slopes and down the valleys he could see the homes of men and women. Thin columns of smoke bespoke warmth, fireside joys, and good cheer. The deep snow of the mountainside seemed to melt away as it reached these lowland homesteads; the dark green of the pine-woods stood out unchallenged by the white gleam of Winter. It was still Autumn down there; all about him and in his heart blew the Winter wind. Did it blow where she was traveling now? Was the snow deep across her path? Did the blast of loneliness chill her as it chilled him? Did she wish for the warm glow of the cave fire? Did she still scorn the eremite?

Boyan looked longest in the direction where Goreno filled the valley on both sides of the Ladna River and bulged over the mountainside. Was she there, or had she set out straight for Uskub? All day her eyes had haunted him; looking at him, piercing him through and through, weighing him in pitiless balances, and condemning. He tried to remember how they had smiled during those two weeks, but scorn and contempt came back to mock him. The wind whistled through the forest.

Boyan shook himself. He had given his life to prayer and meditation, yet in this first temptation he had fallen. Temptation of Satan indeed! But what if she were right after all? No one knew the old story of Turkish massacres and pillage better than Boyan the hermit. His grandfather and father had fought to the end; even Boyan himself had swung a sword, but in every case the result had been fresh agony, new devastation. There was no fighting chance in Macedonia.

"Go away!" his father gasped as the youth leaned over him for the last time. "Alone we can do nothing. Go away to freedom, my son, and find peace."

Contact with a fanatic monk had directed his course, sent him to this Pirin cave, an exile from the world and a stranger to all human interests.

"I have taken my vow; I shall not turn aside," the hermit said firmly. But midnight-black eyes, scorn-blazing, haunted him.

The sky grew dull and leaden. Boyan ached with cold. He shut his lips grimly and set out for his cave; there would be no fire that night. He would do penance on his knees until morning. By that time he would know that his way was just.

In his eagerness to begin he ran at full speed down the slope and reached the cave warm and glowing and ravenously hungry. It was dark in the pines, and as he turned in the path toward the cave, he saw it lighted by a dim, warm glow. Scarcely believing his senses, he rushed forward.

Before the fire, lying on one of the blankets that had served as partition, Adalena was fast asleep. Pushed slightly away from her was the empty kettle that had held the breakfast he had prepared so carefully in the morning.

Boyan asked no questions. Where she had gone, why she had returned, all this was nothing to him. He knew only that she was there where he had first watched her and where he had never hoped to see her

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again. All notion of penance fled from his mind. He knelt beside her, enraptured with every feature, holding his breath lest he disturb her.

The storm outside was gathering; the wind rioted about the cave. He tiptoed across and laid a log on the fire, watching the flames shoot up and the light play over her face and long braids. An irresistible longing to touch her, if only with his fingertips, came over him. He remembered how his hands had tingled that first night and he had believed it was the fever.

She moved slightly and the blankets slipped from under her head, leaving it on the hard stone floor. Boyan drew another to him and folded it thickly. Carefully, lest he waken her, he slipped the improvised pillow beneath her head. She snuggled her cheek against the soft wool, stretched comfortably, and gave a deep sigh. Her eyelids flickered, opened, and she looked up at him, her eyes misty with half-sleep. She stretched one arm out on the blanket and smiled, a slow, drowsy smile.

Boyan gasped quickly.

"Adalena! Darling!"

HE DROPPED on his knees and lifted her face in his hands, his eyes thirsty, feverish, his lips whispering the prayers that the youth of man has never yet whispered to marble goddesses and Virgins lithographed. The candle before the holy image sputtered low in its socket. Mother and Child smiled benignly at the pair before the flaming pine-logs. The wind outdoors had stopped to listen, the woodland evening enveloped them on all sides in a bridal veil of twilight mist, and the rocky floor of the eremite's cave was an arbor of love.

She trembled protestingly at first, but he held her firmly, answering each tremor with a kiss hotter, more passionate than the last.

"You are mine now; mine! Boyan the hermit's! You are my goddess, you my Virgin, my love, Adalena!"

Evening nodded into night; the candle before the Holy Mother burned out; a bed of pine coals glowed drowsily, and the wind outside had quite died down

Adalena ran her hands caressingly through his hair, uttering not a word, lost in thought, in wonder, in all that makes a woman live, and suffer.

The last log crumbled into coals, and the flame went out. The complete extinction of light brought the girl to herself.

"Boyan, my lad, you have eaten nothing! I robbed you of your supper. Come, pile on some more firewood; I must cook you another. And you will need some rest tonight. Ours is a long road to-morrow—the road of freedom."

"The road *to* freedom, Adalena! My uncle escaped to Bulgaria after the massacres in which my parents perished. In Bulgaria, in Sofia, no devil-Turks molest, no——"

"Sofia? Run away to Sofia—we two? And what of Macedonia?" She looked at him puzzled, unbelieving.

He gave a gesture of impatience.

"Macedonia will be no worse for our absence; perhaps much better."

"Boyan!"

The girl pushed his shoulders back with both hands and searched his eyes. Her own were burning.

"Can you mean you would take me away from here, from our work? Can you ask this after our talk yesterday?"

"What is your work?" he asked bitterly. "I have lost every one I ever loved in just such attempts at revolt, and all to no purpose. You are the first happiness I have had in life. I will not give you up." He tried to take her forcibly.

"No." She thrust him away. "You are not worth it."

"Adalena, *milla moya!*" he pled. "Come with me, fly with me to freedom. Let us work for Macedonia from there."

"And our work would be—feeling sorry for those we leave here," she said scornfully. "Yes, that is work—for a coward!" Her voice trembled; she sprang toward the cave-entrance. But Boyan reached it first.

"You shall not!" he cried masterfully. "Not one step until dawn."

She stood a moment undecided, then turned sullenly and seated herself by the fire. Boyan came back and watched the dying coals from the other side. Neither uttered a sound.

MIDNIGHT had come and gone; the cave was dark; silence and warmth combined against the two and wiped out the deep-graven agony of their souls into a blank tablet of dreamless sleep.

It was broad daylight, and late; the sun

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shone brilliantly on the snow. The events of the past night crowded upon them. Adalena shook herself, and at the same time Boyan rose stiffly from the other side of the ashes.

"I think I had better have something to eat before I start," she said, trying to speak quietly. He came and stood beside her.

"You are going, Adalena?"

"Going." She did not ask him what she craved to ask, and he made no comment. They ate together. Then the girl went out and looked at the sun. It was well toward midday. She ran down to the main trail and searched the valley road anxiously. Nobody was in sight; she came back to the cave.

"Hermit," she said sternly, but her voice trembled on the word, "an important piece of work was carried out by the Comrades last night and a message was to be here for me by noon. I must not wait any longer. If it comes, will you keep it until we—until I can get it in some way?"

Boyan bowed.

"I shall keep it for you, Adalena."

She began gathering her possessions together. It was surely past noon. She must start. Yet she lingered. Boyan leaned gloomily against the entrance, now watching her, now staring into the forest.

"I can not," he kept repeating. "I—can not!"

She was ready to start, yet once more she stood before him, looking steadfastly in his eyes. Her hand lay pleading on his shoulders.

"Boyan, *will* you not—come?"

"Adalena," he answered, "you think me a coward. If I believed in your cause, life or death would be indifferent to me. But—I know I am right. What you attempt is futile. I have caused all the massacres I am going to cause."

Her cheeks flushed with the humiliation of another failure.

"Then good-by."

But he clasped her in his arms fiercely, pushing back her face.

"Once," he said passionately. Though she shook her head in refusal, he pressed her lips hotly to his own.

She struggled away. Without looking back, she went straight out through the forest, avoiding the familiar goat-path and, cutting across the *détour* it made, headed directly for the Ladna Valley, Uskub-bound. Her face burned hotly as she stumbled on over the snow-covered stumps and branches.

BOYAN stood rigid in the doorway, watching the spot where she had disappeared among the trees.

A boy's voice roused him:

"There he is! Didn't I tell you? Now let my *Bati* Dobry come home."

The twelve-year-old was running breathlessly up the path, followed by four Turkish officers. Boyan turned quickly to meet them. They seized him roughly.

"What have I to do with you?" he asked in bewilderment.

"Never mind about that, slippery-tongue. We know who you are," one of the Turks snarled at him, trying to slip the handcuffs over his wrists.

"But I don't understand!" he insisted, struggling to free himself.

"Oh, yes, he does!" Mirko danced excitedly first on one foot and then on the other. "He is the very same Holiness with the long name who was at my brother's. He looks like him anyway, even if he has grown a beard since then."

A light broke over Boyan. They were looking for a leader—a leader who wore cassock and hood. His struggles gradually grew less. They bound his hands securely.

"Now, come along." Tossun Effendi yanked him forward while the others ransacked the cave.

"I'll come all right," Boyan retorted, and the new, strange tones of his voice startled him. He seemed to hear his rebel father shouting defiance at the very teeth of his captors. "But be you a little careful how you act. The leader of a whole people can't stoop to talk to yellow pimples like you."

Tossun Effendi's face purpled with anger. His hand trembled on his sword; but—the hermit-monk was right. He dared not strike yet.

The procession went down the path. Mirko tagged, hopeful yet anxious. Finally he tugged at the last Turk's coat.

"Effendi," he begged, "will my brother surely be home soon?"

The Turk shook him off roughly.

"Are you still here, you little bit of vermin? Didn't we tell you your cur of a brother went all to pieces last night? Yes; blew himself to bits and killed Stavry the money-lender and a few sons of Allah

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besides. Now, off with you, or I'll send you after them. *Pssst!*"

The lad's blood froze. And he had betrayed his Holiness! The loss of both his honor and his brother was too much for the twelve-year-old. He threw himself face downward by the side of the road, sobbing bitterly.

CHAPTER XVI

"TAKE ME TO CONSTANTINOPLE!"

IN THE court-room of Murad Pasha consternation reigned. Not in the memory of the oldest Osmanli in Goreno had a prisoner faced the justice of Islam with such an arrogant disdain, such an almost condescending pity toward those who could spin his destiny any way they pleased, as a street urchin spins his top.

The news that the *bash-komitaji*, the master-rebel, had at last been captured traveled far and wide: this unexpected success, following promptly on the tragedy at Stavry's house, wrought confusion among the Comrades, added an elbow-length to the stature of Tossun Effendi, and subtracted from the almanac of Murad Pasha at least twenty Winters. At last he would show those who had tried to pull wool over his eyes that he was the same old wolf who had in days gone by made the Shar uplands resound with terror.

All the prominent Turks in the Goreno district were on hand for the preliminary examination. It was a distinct local "occasion." Hence coffee and sweets were in order, and Christian maidens a plenty were forced to wait on the Mohammedan dandies to lend color and style, *saltanat*, to the ceremony. Murad Pasha was a good host, the Turks all agreed, with unquestionable taste in beauty feminine.

The greater was, therefore, the disappointment of the assembly, come to gloat and scorn and punish, when the prisoner, instead of begging for mercy and cowering in despair, faced his judge with an air of breezy contempt, as if the Pasha of Goreno were beneath his consideration.

The first shock of it took Murad by surprise and distinctly embarrassed him. The peasant maidens, heretofore waiting in pale trepidation on the Turkish dignitaries, seemed suddenly to gain self-confidence and looked defiantly at the leering, smirky Osmanlis sipping coffee on the low divans. But Tossun Effendi, who had led the chained captive into the room, borrowed courage from the obvious discomfiture of his chief and, recognizing his opportunity, gave Boyan a vicious kick.

"What airs are you putting on, you black-head? Do you think you are the garlanded bridegroom at a wedding feast? Look down at the floor, and bend that neck of yours or I'll break it!"

Murad Pasha regained his composure, glared severely at the *bash-komitaji* before him, and began his examination in high, stentorian tones.

"Name?" he thundered at him in Turkish.

"*Bezimeni*, The Nameless One," the hermit answered in calm Bulgarian.

"A madhouse name!" Murad Pasha spat in disgust. "Surname?"

"The Sultan and I need no surnames," the prisoner replied.

"Where were you born?"

"Eh?" the monk seemed surprised at the question.

"Where do you come from, you lunatic?"

"Oh, from the huts of shepherds and uplanders and valley-men," Boyan repeated in liturgic style, "from a thousand villages and hamlets, from field and river-bank and mountain-pass——"

"*Sstl*" Murad burst out in a round of mouth-filling Albanian profanities. "Whom do you know in these parts?"

"All good Bulgarians and none."

"What passport do you carry?"

"Macedonian."

"You lie! There is no Macedonian kingdom."

"There will be one presently."

"You don't know in whose presence you are!" Murad swore.

"You do not know to whom you are talking," the prisoner calmly retorted.

"Have you ever been tried before?"

"By bunglers of your standing? Never."

THE Turks looked at each other in utter stupefaction. Had he been a sheep-hearted shepherd, he would have been kicked into needless submission twenty times over; but even Tossun Effendi's rage had subsided. As for Murad Pasha, the cool, sneering composure of his victim seemed to fascinate and hold dominion over him. He recognized his master; he felt increasingly with every question

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that the rebel of rebels stood before him and he determined to keep his temper until he had coaxed, wheedled, or forced a confession.

"You are a *serbes*, irascible insurgent," he said in frank admiration. "Sign your name here."

"I can't write it in the language of tyranny!"

"Then write it in the language of liberty," Murad sneered.

"That language you can not understand—yet."

Murad took up another cue.

"What is your trade?"

"Ridding the land of weeds like your Excellency," Boyan bowed.

Tossun Effendi shook his fist but Murad waved him off.

"Did you rob the tax-wagon in the Krividol Gulch?"

Boyan smiled.

"I did," he answered.

"Alone?"

"No, I had helpers."

Murad leaned forward.

"Who were they?" he asked.

Boyan smiled more broadly still.

"Oh, the stupid Turkish guards you sent with the money."

"Who was with you?"

"The God of Justice. Are you acquainted, Graybeard?"

Murad winced but proceeded.

"How did you rob the wagon?" he questioned.

The hermit drew himself up.

"That," he said firmly, "that I can not disclose to Albanian cutthroats like the Pasha of Goreno. No, nor to hawk-eyed, wolf-jawed Kurds like Akiff Pasha of Uskub. No, nor to flabby, floursack-heads like Abdul Pasha of Salonica. My story is the story of a whole people. Do you think I shall trust a noonday robber with the secret of a nation?"

"Torture me to death," he continued warmly; "my story dies with me—and you will pay dearly for the loss of that story, Murad! I hear you have boasted of my capture, and sent a message to Akiff Pasha about it. Akiff is your superior; he will order you to send me on to Uskub. Yet Akiff Pasha will learn no more than you have learned. Only in Constantinople will I speak. Only to the Sultan will I tell my story. Take me to Constantinople!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE THIRD WIFE

IN MURAD PASHA'S harem sunshine mixed with music and the low chatter of women. Three of the wives played cards; the fourth, who was really Murad's third, lay on a low divan and looked on in scornful silence.

A toy Pomeranian puppy nosed his way uncertainly about the loose folds of her silken gown and tried to lick her face. She shook him off, but rubbed her cheek fondly against his long hair when he whined. Slave girls crooned in low melancholy minors as they swayed rhythmically in the dance or played soft airs on zithers and gipsy harps. At the door two broad-shouldered, black-skinned eunuch-guards gazed expressionless in the distance.

The room, the common living-room of all the Pasha's household, occupied half the second floor of his long, rambling palace, overlooking in front the main street of Goreno, and at the rear the Ladna River with the Pirin mountains beyond. No curtains obstructed the view toward the river, but the windows over the street were heavily latticed. By these windows Mihirmah, the third wife, lay in a mass of rich purple and brown cushions—a picture to fascinate any male heart, and intended for just that purpose.

Her hair, so deep a brown as to be almost black in the shadows, lay in heavy masses over her head and shoulders, and shaded eyes of an even more deceptive brown. The creamy pale yellow of the loose, shimmering veil, caught at the waist by a gold-embroidered girdle, clung about and only half-concealed her figure. A languor, alluring even in repose, made her slightest gesture voluptuous, and added to her beauty an elusive suggestion, something that enticed while it held back, and promised what it would not reveal—a cold intimacy and a most appealing disdain.

Yet beneath the dreamy sensuousness of her Oriental grace a blood of restless abandon pulsed unceasingly. Her eyes roved about unsatisfied; she was a huntress compelled to play the wrong *rôle* in the chase, and therefore ill-content with those before whom she fled. Had Mihirmah's soul inhabited a man's body, chained hundreds would have crept behind her chariot of

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triumph. All the instincts of the conqueror clamored for expression within her; but she was a woman, with only men to conquer, and Destiny, which handed her over to Murad Pasha, denied her even the joy of conquering her master.

Educated for the harem of the Sultan Abdul Hamid, she had been given to Murad Pasha in lieu of the governorship of Uskub for which he had petitioned. He accepted her perforce and amused himself for awhile with her beauty, but treated her as an uncoveted prize. He was already in love with the young Zayleh. The reign of the belle from Constantinople in Murad's harem was all too brief and left her thwarted, cheated of all her heart desired, oppressed by one unrelieved *ennui.*

To-day the news had gone about that Murad Pasha was trying the *bash-komitaji*, a handsome monk, and that the Pasha would march him about the town before locking him up in jail. It promised to be a diversion at least, and Mihirmah had stationed herself by the windows to watch for the first appearance of the cavalcade as it wound down the street.

The waiting grew tedious; the amusements of the other wives angered her. She scorned to join them and they hated her for it.

"It is your time to shuffle, Zayleh," Fatma, the first wife, cried, laughing gaily. She had just won a round and was in high spirits. Mihirmah pushed aside her pillows and sat erect.

"Will you never stop that nonsense?" she said. "How can you keep at it a whole afternoon!"

"And why shouldn't we, Thunder *Hanoum?*" Fatma retorted. "I'm sure it is as much fun as lolling about with a dog and ruining one's clothes."

"Let her be," Zayleh tossed the cards with supreme indifference. "Of course she treasures the puppy. It is all Murad Pasha ever gave her."

"Come here, Mehmet Bey," she called to her toddling two-year-old. "Come give your mother a kiss." The sturdy lad ran up and threw his arms about her neck with infant impetuosity.

Mihirmah shoved the dog to the floor and went to the end of the room, choking back her tears of rage and mortification. Zayleh did not know how deeply she had cut nor how many nights Mihirmah had prayed on the cold floor for the gift that Allah denied —to her the most precious gift of all.

A BUGLE sounded. The wives abandoned their cards and ran to the windows, peeping from behind the curtains. Mihirmah waved aside a bunch of little slaves and reserved one lattice for herself.

"Allah multiply Murad Pasha's offspring," the wives and slaves cried in chorus.

But it was a miserably short procession and did not come prancing on as expected.

"Why," the youngest wife commented wonderingly, "I don't see the Pasha's white horse at all!"

"It isn't there," Fatma answered, "and Murad himself is not there." She gave a cry of delight. "But Selim is—my Selim is riding at the head." She pressed more closely to the lattice.

The interest of the others waned. Zayleh even left the window and began playing with her baby. Mihirmah did not move. There was something peculiar about the order of the procession that roused her curiosity. Selim Bey rode haughtily at the head; she could easily distinguish his cruel, dissipated face with its complacent smile. Behind him half a dozen *zaptiehs* followed. Then the lines separated, and between them walked a solitary man in hood and cassock, his arms bound behind him. The double lines closed again in the rear.

Selim's mother's attention was quite taken up with watching her adored firstborn. Mihirmah knew that for once she was unobserved. Boldly she pushed aside the lattice that obstructed her view. The shutters gave, and Mihirmah looked down unscreened on the horsemen riding stolidly by.

The prisoner looked about him in proud unconcern. His eyes wandered over the palace above the outer wall — wandered, stopped. Eyes that shot star-fire caught his eyes and held them.

It was just one moment, but for Mihirmah it held a lifetime. Her face burned scarlet; she drew back involuntarily.

Aisha, her life-long nurse and slave, shut the lattice and drew her mistress away. "*Hanoum!*" she protested.

"Aisha!" Mihirmah caught the withered hands in both her own. "He is the handsomest man I ever saw—and a *giaour* monk!"

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"*Ssh!* Hush, little rose," the old woman whispered. "They will hear you. Remember the master."

"But he—the prisoner! Oh, Aisha——" She checked her tongue, but her eyes glowed with passion.

"Selim Bey will see his mother, Fatma *Hanoum*," one of the black eunuchs announced.

CHAPTER XVIII

DELILAH

THE women bowed low. Fatma ran forward crying out in delight. It was not often that Selim Bey troubled himself to visit his mother.

He waved his hand in lordly greeting to the other wives and submitted indifferently to his mother's caresses.

"There, there," he said shaking her off. "That will do. Let me sit down. Beastly hungry."

She led him to a divan and seated herself beside him, now and then stroking his face, patting his knees, and crying out at his beauty and the style of his uniform. When his lunch came he pushed her away, and she devoted her attention to urging food on him, alternately praising its quality and scolding the slaves that it was no better.

"What brought you here alone, Selim?" she asked him. "Where is the Pasha?"

"Oh, he's recovering from the chagrin of his trial, and a pretty mess he made of it too. I didn't hear it but——" he broke off. "Those Bulgar mules need a tighter rein," he finished.

"What is it?" his mother cried in alarm. "Is it about that explosion? Have you had to fight?"

"Fight?" Selim smiled. "Well, a little! One's life is worth about fifteen paras in Goreno; that is, outside of this harem."

"Selim!" Fatma nestled closely to her favorite child.

"The brigands robbed the tax-wagon, you see, in the Krividol Gulch, and now only the money planned for the Summer harem is left. I suppose the Pasha will have to send that to Uskub instead and you ladies stay here next Summer as usual."

A chorus of protesting womankind interrupted him.

"We won't," Zayleh declared. "Murad Pasha promised me I should surely have a new palace by next Spring."

"Afraid you must wait a while longer, baby," Selim teased.

Zayleh was younger than the son; indeed Murad had considered marrying her to his eldest before he himself became infatuated. Selim treated her with a freedom he never exercised toward the other wives.

"You can't make a palace out of straw, and the Pasha has squeezed all the money he can from the District. Our only hope is to get that two hundred thousand. But how this is to be done the Pasha will never know until he learns how to handle wily Bulgars. That monk, for example—— Did you see him?"

"How could I see anything but you, darling boy?" his mother purred.

"I saw him." The voice was rich and vibrant. "Who is he?"

Selim looked up, then swore under his breath. The Sultan's gift to the father had always fascinated the son. The complacent epicure of Goreno felt the glamour of a hundred Stamboul *seraglios* in her every gesture, but it was far too elusive, too subtle a glamour for Selim. Mihirmah knew her power over the rustic Lothario, but she scorned the conquest. What joy in vanquishing a heart that succumbed to any pretty peasant girl's coarse red jacket?

"Whom don't you see, beautiful one?"

His eyes roved over her, sense drunken but unsatisfied.

"That was the *bash-komitaji*, the Nameless One he calls himself, and his lordly manner has quite checkmated the old Pasha, judging from what I heard about the trial. I wish I could have a try at the high and mighty black-cap. Before I was through, either I would know where that money is or he wouldn't be able to tell. Then I'd build a harem of my own perhaps. You would call on my wives; eh, beauty?"

"If they were worth calling on, I might do it," Mihirmah answered—"when you were not there."

His face crimsoned, but even Murad's first-born did not dare go further. Mihirmah strolled leisurely from the room.

Selim finished his lunch and yawned with sleep.

"I'll be going," he said. "In a couple of days perhaps I shall try my luck around Krividol Gulch."

"Must you go there?" his mother asked

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anxiously. "It is cold up among the mountains and these peasants are so troublesome." She held him back.

"It will be good hunting. There will be flocks of little birds that will need a keeper when the nests are torn up."

He laughed at his joke. His mother gave him a puzzled look; he laughed again at her assumed innocence, chucked her under the chin, and left.

In the dim hallway, old Aisha slipped out of her corner and bowed herself to the floor before him.

"My mistress, the gracious Mihirmah *Hanoum*, sends greetings to Most High Selim Bey and will he lend his honorable presence for a few minutes in her humblest of sitting-rooms?"

"Show me the way," he cried in eager surprise. Aisha ran ahead. Selim followed quietly and quickly.

Languidly reclining on a feather-cushioned divan, Mihirmah watched the door, alluring, expectant. The shimmering transparency of her face-veil only revealed and accentuated what it was intended to conceal. A face unveiled was never half so enticing.

Selim entered hastily, closing the door behind him, and bowed low, hesitating to advance. Mihirmah's eyes, ignoring his, focused musingly on the eunuch squatting by the door on the inside, whom Selim had not noticed. He turned on him squarely and pointed to the corridor. The man scrambled to his feet but did not go.

"Murad Pasha's orders," the eunuch protested.

Selim laid his hand suggestively on his sword.

"Murad Pasha will not be here for several hours," he said between closed teeth. "I am master now."

The eunuch almost fell through the door. Selim closed it and approached quickly his father's third wife. She motioned him to a chair near by. Selim Bey trembled; never had he been so near this woman. She leaned forward slightly and looked at him through lids half closed in reverie.

"The *bash-komitaji* made a fool of the Pasha."

"So they say." He was obviously surprised at her question.

"But he does know where the money is?" she continued.

"Doubtless. But what do you want?"

INSTEAD of answering she leaned back on a cushion of turquoise-blue, against which the brown waves of her hair fell in maddening disarray. The sunlight from a latticed window played about the sheer gauze veil. The least suggestion of a blush tinged the creamy whiteness of her face; her lips burned red as fire. She spoke slowly, never looking at her visitor.

"If you could wheedle the secret out of him, it would be worth while," she mused.

"H'm!" Selim grunted.

"But the monk is a proud hero. He will scorn your trial even as he scorned your father's," she continued.

He moved about uneasily. Her whole body spoke a distinct and different message to his conceited sensuality. He regarded her conversation as a mere pretext on her part; and yet—could this woman desire him whom she had appeared to scorn? He tried to catch her eyes, but she looked above and beyond him in the distance; only her lips burned the deeper red.

"If I had that monk for a few minutes or longer, I should know his secret."

"Perhaps you would," Selim agreed. "But I don't see how you could ever have him."

She laughed tauntingly.

"Selim Bey is resourceless in his father's palace?"

A smile of challenging scorn curled her lips. For Mihirmah knew her man.

"Resourceless? Bah! I could carry you off, every one of you, if I chose."

"But you are reluctant to have a woman assist you to that treasure of two hundred thousand piasters?" she mocked.

Selim snatched for her hand, but she eluded him.

"Here," he cried bruskly, "why do you want to do it?"

"To break this utterly unendurable monotony," she answered. "My blood tingles, adventure-mad; I am dying here of *ennui*."

She yawned in weary tedium and stretched her arms above her head. The loose sleeves fell over her shoulders; her lips pouted disappointedly, tantalizingly; a frown clouded her brow; her eyes fixed upon a point just above his head, but Selim could not bring them down, try whatever artifice he would.

"Look at me!"

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He spoke passionately, but she made no response, waiting.

"Well, I'll arrange it and let you know this afternoon," he concluded, and bent quickly over her. "To relieve this day's *ennui*——" he began; but she slipped past him and clapped her hands. Aisha entered.

"Selim Bey would leave my apartment, but he is not sure of his way out," Mihirmah said calmly.

The old woman salaamed profoundly.

"I shall guide the honorable Bey," she answered.

Selim hesitated; then he followed the old slave.

Mihirmah watched quietly until the door closed. When the footsteps had quite died away, she walked up and down the room, clasping her hands in exultation.

"Before night I shall see him!"

She locked the door, pushed her veil away from her face, and gazed at herself in the long mirror, her fingers gripping the sides of the frame.

"I'll have him at my knees," she whispered. "He can not resist me. He—*can not!*"

CHAPTER XIX

THE FRAGRANCE OF HYACINTHS

THE sun peeped gingerly through the cobwebby, iron-barred hole into a small rectangular cell with a bed of clammy, packed mud and only a small colony of cell-mates crawling over the walls—a cell clean and right comfortable as cells go in the land of the Turk.

The prisoner lay immobile, worn out, apathetic—or perhaps absorbed in deep meditation. Boyan had read his Turkish captors aright. His first exhibition of the lofty manner, in front of the cave, had been half accidental; its complete success with Tossun Effendi had encouraged the eremite to play a consistent part to the end.

He had nothing to confess, but the assumption of haughty refusal impressed the sons of Islam, ever used to expect submission from their victims. Where stolid, stupid obstinacy, moreover, was punished with barbarous torture, his lordly inflexibility had compelled an increasing self-respect. The Turks treated him as a petty sergeant treats a general whom the fortunes of war have made his captive. He was actually imprisoned in the best cell available in Murad Pasha's jail.

One other idea lent him strength and steeled his courage; as long as he was the "master rebel" Adalena was relatively safe. She was probably out of the Goreno region by now, Boyan meditated, crossing some snow-bound pass, afoot or ahorse across some valley, perhaps stopping overnight at upland villages preaching revolt. Perchance some one else rode beside her. He brushed aside a taunting memory; he could have been that some one.

Did she still scorn? Would she condemn the *bash-komitaji* of the Goreno jail as she had the eremite of the cave of dreams? Something seemed to have severed all the threads that connected him with the hermit of the Pirin cave. His knees would bend no longer and, try as he might, the words of prayer and litany had forsaken his memory.

Live things crept about his ankles and scuttled from under his palms. He felt around for the possible bread-crust or crock of water left behind by some Moslem prisoner, for he knew Turkish prison methods too well to expect any himself before he had confessed.

He searched the floor carefully, and though he found no water, his hands finally fell on a chunk of hard bread. He felt it over, shook off a wriggling forager, and scraping the surface a little with his fingernails carried his find back to the clay corner which his body had dried if not warmed. He was famished, and his sorry meal only whetted his hunger.

Chills ran through him; the utter misery of the cell was revolting, and a double sense of abhorrence mixed with terror came over him as he thought of Adalena. Perhaps some day she would be in such a cell. The idea led to others that made him shudder as he thought of Turkish jails and jailers.

The door swung open; the dirty glare of a lantern flashed squarely in his eyes, and the long, hound-like face of the jailer frowned above it.

"Come," the Turk said gruffly.

Boyan followed him through the maze of passages to the prison-gate; the fresh air gushed in as the iron doors opened, and brilliant sunshine burst all about him. Two soldiers stepped up, chained his hands behind him and led him off. From the rough stone of the prison passages they came into finer corridors, then on to polished wood

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and carpeted floors. The soldiers paused before an open door and took off his chains.

"Go in," they ordered, and locked the door.

Boyan stood in the center of the room and looked about puzzled. It was evidently a sitting-room. Heavy, soft-colored tapestries hung on the walls; a wide, yielding divan with puffy cushions stretched beneath the latticed window, and the foot lingered on silken rugs of luxurious thickness. Through the voluptuous fragrance of hyacinths which hung heavily in the air a suggestion of womankind pervaded the room.

In an alcove, shut off by portières drawn aside, a steaming dinner was set for two. The whole thing was so unreal, so much like a page torn from the Thousand and One Nights! Boyan walked to the table and touched the browned fowl with his finger-tips.

"This is real, anyhow," he laughed aloud, and the next minute the ascetic of the Pirin cave was lost to all that extended beyond the reach of fork and spoon.

A man physically ready for any emergency stepped from the table and turned to test the reality of the couch that invited to slumber. For when one has passed with open eyes from Oriental squalor to Oriental luxury, the gate of dreams yawns wide open.

A strange cloud of hyacinths was all about him. A presence elusive, seductive; a soft, silken rustling seemed to lull and rouse him all at once. The swish of a veil caressed his cheek. He shook himself half awake.

A woman sat beside him wrapped in a mist of wavy blue. As he opened his eyes she stretched her arms over her head and rested her palms at her neck. Boyan closed his eyes, then looked up once more. She was still there. A smile of idle contentment, and a desirous smile, played about her lips, all ready to speak. The eyes sparkled, burned behind long shading lashes.

"You have seen me before?" she asked him.

Boyan heard himself answering,

"Once, at a window over a balcony."

"How strong you are, and handsome, and noble!" she whispered low and bent over him.

A memory, the most important of all, hovered about the fringe of his consciousness, but his eyes were still heavy and the blue cloud of hyacinths enveloped him, ravished his senses, banished his reason.

"How can you die so young?"

"Die!" Boyan repeated.

"You are lost beyond recovery—and I am so near.

She touched his eyelids softly with her finger-tips.

"Don't you think I am beautiful?"

"Beautiful," Boyan murmured.

His head sank back on the pillow; his eyelids felt deliciously heavy beneath her caresses. She leaned nearer, closer; he could feel the warmth of her body coursing about him, her breath against his cheek, the soft folds of her sleeve about his neck. A wave of fire swelled, rose, engulfed him. Her hands clasped his and pressed them closely to her lips.

Was it the touch of her lips that roused him? Eyes that knew no languor—dark, compelling eyes—looked at him. Cool, strong hands pressed his own. Instead of whispered caresses he heard——

"OURS is a long road to-morrow—the road of freedom."

With all his strength he pushed her savagely from him and leaped to his feet.

"Temptress of Satan!" he hissed. "So this is your Turkish trick to wheedle out my secret. And you call yourself a woman!"

"I am a woman."

She struggled upright and stood beside him. Baffled where she had been sure of victory, she crimsoned with rage.

"You are an upland brute." She gritted her teeth. "Why—I loved you. Do you know it? I love you this minute!"

"Love!"

He laughed in scorn.

"What do you know about love? You are only a body. There is no soul in you."

"You lie!" she cried. "You lie like a Moslem. They all say we have no souls. They make us slaves of their passions, but we conquer them. You cast me off, but I shall conquer you."

She clasped him by the shoulders, her body atremble with fury. He struggled desperately to escape; her arms were blue with the pressure of his fingers.

"What are you?" he cried in distraction. "What would you have? Do you know what it means to be a woman?"

"Tell me," she answered. "I would sell my very self for one minute of freedom and power."

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"Let go your hold then. You are a serpent, fascinating. I can not think when you hold me."

She dropped her arms, breathing heavily. Boyan drew back and studied her carefully a long time. At length he spoke to her quietly.

"There is a woman in our mountains," he said. "She is younger than you, more beautiful than you, and she has given up everything for freedom—for the freedom of the people. Love, happiness, luxury—all this is nothing to her. She has forgotten her youth and beauty for the sake of old Macedonia. She had more manhood in her than ten men, and therefore she is the more womanly. She prays not, but she has more religion than a whole monastery of murmuring monks. Men, women, and children wait for her, worship her. You must give, not sell, yourself for freedom."

"You mean——" Mihirmah said slowly, wonderingly. "I must forget I want it?"

"Forget it and earn it," Boyan answered simply.

"But how——"

She caught his arm excitedly. He jerked back.

"*Bash-komitaji*," she whispered, "I know how I shall win freedom. I shall free you and escape myself."

He looked at her intently.

"You can not."

"I can," she answered proudly. "Listen. I was to entice you, conquer you, then wrest your secret for Selim Bey. I wanted to win you; he consented for your secret."

She lowered her voice, speaking faster.

"He may be near, listening, watching. Pretend you yield to me. Lead me to the divan; talk to me."

He was distrustful, bewildered. "What do you mean?"

"Put your arm about me," she ordered, "and trust me. It is all I can do. I—I am different now."

As he drew her to him, she raised her voice somewhat, caressing his face with her hand.

"If you do love me as you claim," she said, "then tell me of your people, of your plans for freedom, and how you will get money for the revolt."

He shoved her away.

"I have nothing to tell you," he muttered. "I will die rather than be so false."

She understood him only as playing his *rôle*, turned from him, and crossed the room, piqued.

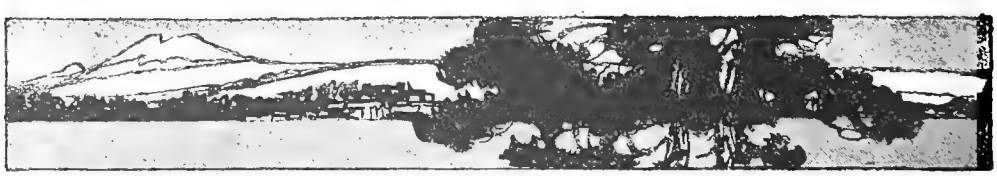
"Then you will never see me again!"

She looked back and half held out her arms, expecting him to rush to her. Boyan looked at her one moment, then buried his face in the divan.

When she threw back the curtain that concealed the entrance, Selim Bey stepped into the opening and looked keenly at the man on the cushions, then at the woman.

"Well?" he asked.

TO BE CONCLUDED



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WE GUIDES THE PERFESSER

by H.D.Couzens

THE trouble is, if I tell you about this you'll think that Sam and I are a couple of hold-ups, you not having known Old Saber-Tooth or understanding the maddening provocation we had. But it was more a question of getting even than it was of money, and there are men that you can't really hurt unless you hit them a good hard swat on the wallet. If you happen to need the money yourself, so much the better. It's killing two birds at once.

That's how it was with us, and I'll ask you to wait till I'm all through before you judge Sam and me as a pair of cold, callous road-agents. My conscience hasn't bothered me none to speak of, and as for Sam's conscience—"h'm!" as Old Saber-Tooth would say.

Of course no one in his right mind would go to Bakersfield unless it was on business.

Bakersfield consists, as you know, of oil-derricks, blind pigs and the aroma of crude oil so rich and solid that you can bite hunks of it out of the air. It is surrounded by sand, greasewood, gophers and the Southern Pacific Railroad, and offers few intellectual treats or means of recreation other than watching the tank-cars shunt off and absorbing a local brand of side-winder booze which serves equally well to take grease out of overalls.

It is a depressing village.

I know of no sadder sight than crude black petroleum flowing out of a well, besmirching the fair face of Nature, unless it is a tenderfoot from east of the Sierras buying up oil-stock.

The reason Sam and I were there was this:

When we left the fruit-ranch to go East and clean up one race with that good little mare Sally Connors, the Japs surged into Vaca Valley. This was all unbeknownst to us. We'd left things in capable hands and were too busy counting the lights on the Great White Way (as they call New York City's chief humbug), after finding all that easy money, to bother about business. We hadn't had a real holiday for a good while.

About every half-hour of the time a messenger boy would gallop up to wherever we happened to be and thrust a telegram at us which we would petulantly shove into a pocket. They were all from our assistant foreman, whom we had left in charge, asking madly for instructions, and once in a while we would wire back: "Go as far as you like," or something like that, and forget it.

You know how it was—big year, overproduction, and labor scarcer than feathers on a Mexican dog. And these heaven-sent Orientals offered to work anywhere from two to four bits cheaper a day than the Chinks. A Chink will work, day in and

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day out, without a whimper. He never squeals nor goes on strike. When he bucks up against this ruinous sort of competition he simply wraps up his joss, his personal devil-scarers and his opium layout in a bandanna handkerchief and silently steals away—and he never comes back.

When the Chinks had all gone, up went the price of labor and kept going up, till—oh, shucks! what's the use of dwelling on the awful story?

They took four-year leases on the ranches of the ones who went busted on freight-rates, and bought up others.

It's ancient history now, but the point that bears on this story is that the Grand High Sachem who put over the deals in our territory was a white man. He'd been in Japan a number of years in some office or other and, having no more conscience than a Gila monster, had thrown in his lot with the little brown men, as an organizer. He certainly made himself useful, for, while most of our people would have sicked Faithful Fido on a Jap, they had to listen to this party, albeit with loathing, as it were.

He made them. It's a painful thing to see a white man rounding on his kind that way, but he held all the cards in the deck when it came to the show-down. If it hadn't been for this sublimated horse-thief we might have pulled out even, but what with our assistant foreman on the verge of lunacy, afraid to take the initiative in anything, and Sam and I off interested in the Sport of Kings, he beat us to it.

We managed to hang on to the ranch with the help of the horse-race money, but the whole affair, when the smoke blew off, had set us back exactly thirty-five thousand bucks.

It was up to Sam and me to consider our assets, for we were only two jumps away from the man who asks you your name and hands you the folded paper. At first we decided to take the little mare up to Emeryville and let her scamper around the track for what odds we could get. But just then they put a stop to horse-racing. It was just as well, for Sally had earned a long rest.

THEN, as we were looking gloomily over the stuff in the tin lock-box, we came across the deed to this land way back in the foot-hills below Bakersfield. We'd forgotten all about it.

A couple of years before, while in San Francisco, we'd run across a man we knew who was up against it. Sam offered to stake him, but he said no, he wouldn't take any money outright, but would sell us this land, which he admitted he'd never seen, so we took him up for the sake of old times, and promptly forgot the transaction.

Just then, though, anything that had a dollar in it looked good, for we were grabbing at straws, plumb frantical. So we went down to look over the property. It wasn't promising. There was a small stream, as the deed said, but it was bitter water and the soil was so full of alkali you could wash with it like soap. There was good grazing-land a few miles away on either side, but here the crop was chiefly yucca and cactus. We planted some grass-seed and other stuff and I had some of the soil analyzed by a cousin of mine at Stanford, but his report wasn't favorable. He said frankly that the only actual use he could see for the land was for the purpose of raising horned toads for the market.

So this Spring we went down again. We were anxious to see whether any of the things we had planted had come up, and since our first visit Sam had cooked up a land scheme whereby we might promote a company and saw off the property on some of the criminally rich lungers from the East, down Los Angeles way. Sam's an ingenious cuss, but it's lucky he has me for a partner to look after his morals, sometimes.

Nothing had sprouted. The land didn't amount to shucks, and an Angora goat would have starved to death on it. To tell the truth, we'd both built up some hope that our gamble would pan out something.

But Sam's land scheme seemed our only hope, and we loafed around kind of despondent when we got back to Bakersfield. We hoisted in a few at the hotel bar, in a half-hearted fashion, and then sauntered over to Tommy Desaules's blacksmith shop to see if we couldn't strike something to cheer us up. Tommy was a cheerful old souse who used to shoe ponies for Sam's father up North in the days when Lucky Baldwin was impoverishing the bookmakers.

Sam was standing in the doorway and all at once he says, in that slow, drawly way of his: "Oh, oh, oh! Here comes Uncle Dusenberry!"

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COMING across the street was a shabby little man in a long frock coat and a plug hat with the fur all rubbed the wrong way. He had spectacles so strong they made his little eyes look all blurry. He held his hands behind his back, and had a queer, racking gait, half walk and half run, for all the world like a road-runner. He was talking to himself all the time.

He came racking into Tommy's, and by the expression on the old gentleman's face I judged it was cuss-words he was talking to himself.

"Well, sir," says he, very sharp and perky, "have you got me a guide yet? I must say I don't think much of your promises, sir. My stay is costing money and I have no time to waste, nor money either, in idling in your most unattractive town."

Tommy hit a red-hot bar another lick and straightened up.

"Sorry, Perfesser. It ain't my promise. It's the other man's. He came, as he said he would—pickled to the ears. I didn't think you would care to trust yourself with an intoxicated man, sir, so I sent him away," and Tommy winked at me and bit off a hunk of "Blacksmith's Delight."

"Who's your friend?" I whispered.

Tommy looked at Sam and me and winked again.

"Oh, excuse me," says he; "Perfesser, let me interduce two friends of mine, Mr. Dave Lockwood and Mr. Sam Leveredge—Perfesser Alonzo van Frelinghuysen!"

He said it all, Tommy did, just like that!

The Professor looked at us, peering with his head on one side like some sassy little bird; and Sam and I looked at each other. A little while ago we had been feeling bad and looking for a diversion, but now we kind of sloughed off those feelings.

"Excuse me," drawled Sam; "excuse me, Professor van—ahem!—you said something about looking for a guide, sir. What was you—er—wishing to be guided to, sir, if I may make so free as to ask?"

"Saber-tooth tigers!" snapped the Professor. "Do you know where to find them?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Believe me, sir, I can guide you to where them things are a-rampin' and a-roarin'——"

The little man fairly hissed at him, showing his long yellow teeth in a kind of snarl. I had never heard of saber-tooth tigers before, but I saw right away that he and the name kind of fit together.

"No levity, sir! I am not here to trifle. If you know where saber-tooth tigers are to be found——"

Here Tommy cut in.

"It's all right, Perfesser. These gents are familiar with the whole country around here, and they can take you right to the spot where that other feller was. You're in luck to fall in with them. They're doin' you a favor at that."

The Professor looked us all over again from head to foot. It made me uncomfortable and warm under the collar, it was so blamed patronizing and supercilious.

Says I to myself, "This is a mighty unpleasant old party."

"H'm! H'm!" says he, after looking about four dollars' worth. "Are you men cowboys?"

Now we'd been riding for two days, so we had overalls, boots and Stetsons on, but the only cattle we'd ever punched were a couple of milk cows up at the ranch.

I couldn't tell a lie, so I says, very humble: "No, sir. We're sheepmen!" trying, at the same time, to look as locoed as a sheep-herder.

"H'm! H'm!" says he again. "So you are sure you know the country round here, are you, and can guide me to the place?"

"Like a duck!" says Sam. "We can show you recommendations from the crowned heads——"

"Fudge!" the Professor snaps out. "Don't be an idiot! As I can not do any better I shall have to employ you. Be at my hotel at five o'clock sharp to-morrow, with three saddle-horses and a pack-horse. I'll order the supplies." He was about to leave when he stopped short. "Ah, it occurs to me. I shall require but one of you, of course. Why two? There is the extra expense of a horse, provisions and wages. One of you will be quite enough."

"Don't separate us, sir," says Sam, pleadingly. "We were raised together and have never been parted. It would break our hearts. My partner, here, hardly eats enough to keep a bird alive—just picks, as you may say; and as for wages, why, one portion will do for us both. We would hardly know what to do with a lot of money. At any rate, Professor," he snapped out in a business-like tone, "it's both or none. Take us or leave us."

The Professor hesitated.

"Well," he says at last, half to himself,

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"I've wasted enough time and spent enough, as it is. It will have to be. You may both come!" And he racked out, his hands behind him, and pointed off up the street.

"MY, WHAT a sweet disposition!" says Sam. "I bet his real name is John W. Grouch!"

Tommy Desaules keeled over on a bench. "Har! Har! Oh, oh! Hurroo-oo!" he roared, so loud you could have heard him over at Mohave. "You fellers are in for it now. Guides to Old Saber-Tooth! Ho, ho!"

"Say, look-a-here, Tommy Desaules," says Sam. "Cut out the high-strikes, *pronto!* Who's funeral is this, anyhow? Now stop howling and give us the dope on this, quick. Is this old party locoed, or is it on the level about those saber-tooth——"

"Sure it's on the level. And don't you boys go messin' around with the notion that Old Saber-Tooth is locoed. He's locoed like a fox; that's what he is."

This is what Tommy told us:

A couple of months before, some fellow projecting around in the mountains had found the skull of a ferocious varmint called the saber-tooth tiger. From present knowledge I bet you it's a good thing for the cattle and sheep business, not to mention the human race, that the critter belonged to prehistoric times and is extremely extinct.

I judge that saber-tooth tigers would be dangerous pets. Their skull was four times the size of a mountain-lion's, and the upper dog-teeth were a foot and a half long. Cheerful thing to have prowling around the house on dark nights.

The news of finding that skull had been spread about, and this Professor van Frelinghuysen comes boiling into Bakersfield, just bent on tearing the hills asunder in a hunt for desiccated tigers. It seems the fool things are worth money to museums and such, and he had bought the original skull from the finder for a hundred dollars and wanted to get more, with the skeletons, if possible, in a hurry, before some one else got ahead of him. He had counted on the fellow who found that one leading him to more, but the fellow had immediately tanked up and then lit out for San Francisco with the idea of reducing it to a dry camp with the rest of the money,

So Old Saber-Tooth, as they called him, had become the local pest. The number of things he knew was wonderful but impossible to discover, because even if he didn't know a thing he thought he did. He'd lived in foreign places, among people he could boss around, so long that he was as arbitrary and domineering as the lead-mule in a borax-team.

And when he wasn't bullyragging Tommy Desaules and everybody else to get him a guide, he talked saber-tooth tigers by the hour, whether any one listened or not. The fact is that the old skeesicks had made himself so repellent and obnoxious that he couldn't have got a guide in Bakersfield for love or money.

"He's the orneriest little chunk of pizen that ever struck town," says Tommy. "Crosses everybody, argues with 'em and orders 'em around like a passel of peons. And he's mean as a rat. Got plenty of money, but dickers for everything like an Indian. It's the general opinion that he's kind of unwholesome, and if you fellers chasten him up some out there in the hills you'll earn the thanks of the community. Now, listen," he went on throwing off his apron; "I don't know nothin' about where that feller found the skull, but if you're goin' out with the old terrapin we'll prowl around the bars a bit and I'll pick up what I can. You boys don't need much coachin', I reckon."

II

WELL, we got away at sunup next morning. Old Saber-Tooth had actually discarded his plug hat for an old felt one, and his frock coat for a well-worn, mighty serviceable-looking rig of khaki and leggings. My respect for him went up a couple of notches at that, but it was plain from the first that he wasn't used to horses. His exploring had mostly been done on foot.

Sam and I had the same ponies we'd used before, a mighty competent pair of plugs, but Saber-Tooth's kept rearing and buck-jumping and bolting off, the Professor hanging on to the saddle-horn and hollering: "Whoa! Whoa, horsie!"

Before we had gone a mile he made me change with him and after I'd sneaked out the handful of burrs from under the saddle the horse went along all right, but it hadn't improved Old-Saber-Tooth's temper, which, the Lord knows, was bad enough at any time.

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Sam and I did our best to make pleasant conversation. For instance, a jack-rabbit jumped up right under our feet and went skallyhooting off, sailing over the brush like a deer and looking as big as a house. The Professor, nervous and near-sighted, pulled up, plumb startled out of his wits.

"What's that?" he yelled.

"That," said Sam, politely, "is an antelope, sir. They are almost extinct, and very rarely seen——"

But Saber-Tooth had got his second wind and sized the critter up. The look of withering contempt he flashed at Sam would have annihilated any one with a sense of shame.

"You're a fool!" says he. "That was a plain, common jack-rabbit; species, *lepus californicus* genus——" and he reeled off the botanical names of the rabbit as well as those of the pronghorn antelope, so's we'd recognize one when we saw it.

A while later an animal went scurrying off, close to the ground, some distance away. It wasn't easy to make out in the scrub and, taking another chance on the Professor's near-sightedness, I pointed it out.

"There's a queer thing, Professor," I remarked, earnestly; "an animal worth investigating. Ride over and look at it and tell us its real name, won't you? We call it a kitten-badger down here."

Well, the gleam I got from those near-sighted lamps fairly scorched my hair.

"I've seen skunks before, my good man," he says, his words like drops of ice-water. "You're talking too much and making fools of yourselves. Please ride in the rear and cease annoying me."

We gave it up. We were playing his own game. He had it on us so far, and it wasn't till the third night that we broke even on that count. We were leading him around a trifle circuitous, you understand. It killed time and that made him madder than anything else just then, and besides, I needed time to study over something that was worrying me and I couldn't work out.

I wanted an idea and couldn't get it, and when we made camp that third night I was plumb wore out with mental strain and hadn't arrived anywhere. The Professor had told us everywhere he'd been and all the things he'd done and the names of all the fauna and flora, as he called 'em, of the known world, firing the information at us spiteful, as if he was bound to give us a liberal education, much as the duty sickened him.

Between whiles he had nagged us till Sam, if I hadn't made him solemnly swear to be peaceable and leave things to me, would have torn him into fine shreds. He found fault with the way we made a greasewood fire, with the chuck, with us in general, and the whole shooting-match.

If he hadn't been lost and known it he'd have hiked off by himself, I believe. We didn't know how to make camp, we didn't know this, we didn't know that. When he was in Borneo—and so on, ad infinitesimal.

Of course you have guessed that we helped this chatter along by planting a well-chosen blunder where it would do the most good. He was happiest when he was miserable, and it was our duty to keep him so. A word chipped in here and there and a little smoke fanned in his eyes when he began to lag would start him all over again. It was plain that Saber-Tooth didn't care much for human beings, and a certain look would come in Sam's eyes that led me to wondering how the Professor had lived so long.

TO MAKE things more comfy and cheerful, this third night, Sam had bit on a chunk of solder out of a can, busted a tooth and the inside of his head was doing several thousand revolutions to the minute. He was taking whisky to stop the ache, and he was so mad he fairly foamed at the mouth.

Some people doubt the compelling power of the human eye, but it was mine that kept Old Saber-Tooth from being destroyed that evening. He had dived into his blanket in a huff because we hadn't found any saber-tooth tigers, and Sam and I sat by the fire talking. We hadn't got one real rise out of Saber-Tooth. He was impervious to that sort of thing, and Sam argued that the only thing to be done was to lead him into the mountains or over into Death Valley and lose him.

"The old rooster has it coming to him," says Sam, spiteful as a rattlesnake, "and that's the only way."

"All right, Sam," I said, soothingly. "Only it's crude and unrefined and unsatisfactory, except as a last resort. Wait one more day and I'll hit on something."

Just then Old Saber-Tooth jumps into the circle of firelight with a yell, his hair

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standing on end, fairly shaking with fright.

"The wolves!" he whooped. "My God, the wolves! Don't you hear them?"

There was a couple of coyotes singing off a ways in the brush, but Sam and I hadn't paid no attention to them.

"Wolves?" says I, not catching his drift.

But Sam lets out a howl and rolls plumb into the fire.

"Wolves!" he hollers; "Oh, ha! ha! Ouch—cuss this tooth—wolves! Ho! Ho! Why, you ornery, little no-account squinch-owl of a professor, those ain't wolves! They're nothin' but little old coyotes; species, *howlitis;* genus, *sneakthiefus!* Oh, ho! ho! Ugh! Ggggg!" This last on account of his tooth.

Now I'm telling you the truth. This Professor van—this Saber-Tooth party—had been most everywhere in the world except camped in the Southwest on a moonlight night. He could probably have taken the left hind-toe of a fossil coyote and reconstructed the whole animal from it; but he couldn't take the moon-song of a lonesome coyote and reconstruct anything else from it but a man-eating timber-wolf. You tell me why, now.

He stood there a full minute after Sam spoke, letting it soak in, while the coyotes yi-yied as if their hearts would break, and I never saw a man so chopfallen in my life. I almost felt sorry for him. Then, without a word, he turned and sneaked back into his blanket. We were square on one point, anyway.

Sam was still alternately laughing, cussing his tooth and putting out the places where his clothes had caught fire, when suddenly he clapped his hand to his mouth and spat something into it.

"By grapes!" he says; "there's that filling I paid Doc Sawyer twelve dollars for in San José," and he threw it down, disgusted, in the dirt. "Twelve dollars' worth of filling gone to blazes, a roaring toothache, three days of misery and suppressed murder—and all for a man that don't know a coyote from a—oh golly!"

He took another drink of whisky and rolled into his blanket. I heard him snicker once or twice, in spite of his misery; and then his peculiar, individual brand of whistling snore.

But I sat awhile, wide awake. We'd wasted three days, and I wished to Jemima that bright idea would come along. Saber-Tooth was a hard man to beat unless you used main force, and that was out of the question; so I was feeling mighty cheap and mean. Something shone in the sand and, sort of idly, I picked it up. It was Sam's gold filling. I turned it over in my palm. It was a good-sized filling. It seemed a pity to waste it, and I stuck it in my vest-pocket. After that I took a drink of Sam's toothache medicine, rolled a cigarette and sat staring at the greasewood fire for two solid hours, smoking one cigarette after another.

Then I went over and shook Sam awake.

"Ho, ho!" he began, drowsily, "coy——"

"Shut up!" I hissed in his ear. "Come out of this, Sam. I want to talk to you."

First I tiptoed over to Saber-Tooth's blanket and made sure he was sleeping sound. Then I led Sam off into the brush about an eighth of a mile and talked to him in earnest for, maybe, half an hour. After he had crowed and chuckled a while and pounded my back till it was sore he unhobbled his pony, saddled and rode off across country, and I turned in for a quiet, contented snooze.

Old Saber-Tooth woke me. The sun was pretty well up.

"I thought you wouldn't mind," said he, in a voice that you might call sort of meek and chastened; "but time is precious and we had better breakfast and be off. And—ah—where is—ah—Mr. Leveredge?"

"Toothache," I answered. "Got too strong for him during the night and he rode back to town for relief. He'll join us later. Can't lose Sam. He's right fond of you, Professor."

ALL morning Old Saber-Tooth avoided my eye. You never saw a man turn humble so quick. His professional pride must have had an awful bump, for the superciliousness was all jarred out of him. It wasn't my business to rub it in any, as Sam would have done, so we got along fairly decent, for the first time.

It was time to find those tigers, so I took him to the approximate place by a short cut, and we prowled around the hills all the afternoon. I wasn't much use at this. Hunting tigers isn't my line, but it was Saber-Tooth's all right. He knew just where to look to save time and labor, and just before sunset he found what he wanted

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—a kind of hard, gravelly stuff, like cement full of pebbles; and when we had cleared away a part I could see, sticking here and there, like plums in a cake, some gray knobbly things that he said were tiger-bones. The Professor did a war-dance and condescended to shake hands.

"I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. Lockwood—deeply so. You and your friend shall have ten dollars apiece extra for this."

"Thank you, sir," says I gratefully; "this will be good news for Sam."

I had rolled a cigarette and was feeling for a match.

"Why, shucks!" said I, very loud and annoyed, "where in blazes are all my matches? Have you got one, Professor? Oh, never mind. Here's one!"

I turned my vest-pocket inside out and, 'way in the bottom, tangled in the cloth, was a lone sulphur match. I scratched it, held it till the brimstone burned off and lit my cigarette.

"Hello!" says the Professor suddenly. "What's that?"

"What's what?"

"You dropped something. Here it is. What might *that* be, Mr. Lockwood?"

We were standing on a dark patch of clear ground. Saber-Tooth stooped and picked up something. But he didn't hand it back to me. He held it close to his glasses and turned it over and over in his fingers. The old cock was near-sighted, all right, but he certainly had a corking pair of specs.

"Where did you get that, Mr. Lockwood?"

"Oh that," I said, careless-like; "that rubbish? I just picked it up."

I turned around, plenty nonchalant, and sat down, my back against some tiger-bones, and went on smoking. Out of the tail of my eye I saw him slip Sam's gold filling into his pocket. He came and sat down beside me and fanned himself with his hat. It was close to grub-time and too late to do any more work that day.

"I'm slightly interested in minerals," said the Professor, in an offhand way, looking up at the sky. "Where did you say you found it?"

"Found what? Oh, *that!* Why, down below there on some land that belongs to Sam and me. We thought we were stuck with that land. You see, Saber—I mean, Professor—the land itself ain't worth a hoot in——"

"I didn't know you owned land about here. You didn't tell me," says he, as though it grieved him. "Tell me about the mineral on it."

I turned to him, kind of pityingly. I was just beginning to enjoy myself, you understand.

"Mineral?" says I, scornfully; "why Saber-Tooth—I *should* say, Professor—except for a few common rocks scattered about there ain't any more mineral on that land than on the palm of your hand; that is, except that yellow stuff—fool's gold, they call it—pyrites. There's a lot of that in the stream, and I always thought it looked kind o' pretty. I came near getting the laugh on myself once on account of it. It's a joke on me, at that. I got the fool idea it might be worth something—might be gold, maybe—and filled my vest-pocket with it. But riding back to town I remembered about a fellow who got fooled with pyrites, thinking it was gold, and had to set up drinks for the whole town for a week, so I dumped it out of my pocket, *pronto*. That piece must have stuck down in a corner. "No," I went on, "the thing on that land—why it's a kind of a secret, sir—Sam and I were only just tipped off to it by some friends in the oil business, but," I leaned over close to his ear and whispered, "there's *oil* there!"

"H'm!" says he, thoughtfully. His lips were drawn back from his yellow teeth. "H'm! Perhaps—I've some little knowledge of such things—perhaps we might look at this land of yours and see, when we're through here."

He sat there by himself, saying "H'm!" every now and then, while I went down to camp to get supper. That night, after I had turned in, I saw him steal over to make sure I was asleep. My imitation being plenty good enough he went to his saddle-bags and took out a little bottle and a flat stone. He rubbed Sam's gold filling on the stone, poured on the acid and I heard him say "H'm!" again.

Then I dropped into the sweet, innocent slumber of childhood. Things were coming along!

III

THE next day we snagged out one complete tiger-skull and a job lot of assorted bones. It was the toughest kind of work chipping them out of that hard stuff, and the Professor's mind didn't

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seem to be on it. He seemed sort of absent. Toward evening Sam rode in, with his tooth plugged up, and as gay as a lark. He and I were admiring the skull and figuring on the odds in favor of a saber-tooth tiger against eight grizzly bears, when the Professor says:

"I don't think we can make much headway on this formation with the tools we have. It is too hard to work. We had better go back and get a better assortment—at once."

He was right, at that, so we broke camp early in the morning. We made easy stages, for I had certain theories as to the moment when we ought to arrive at our land and at Bakersfield.

"Sam" says I, as we were jogging along, "did you hear any more of that land proposition?"

"Oh, yes," Sam replies, "they raised the ante three thousand. We'll get our figure for the old horned-toad pasture yet." He talked real cheerful, and didn't keep old Saber-Tooth from hearing.

"Did you get it in writing?"

"Sure!" He handed me a paper. I looked it over, said "H'm!" like Saber-Tooth, and stuck it carefully in my pocket.

"Mr. Lockwood tells me," put in Saber-tooth, "that you have some land in the vicinity, and I suggested that, as I have some slight knowledge of geology, it might—er—be a good idea to let me look it over and give you my opinion, such as it is. I might tell you something of its value."

"Can you tell it at night, Professor, same as you can timber-wolves?" Sam asked softly.

But Saber-Tooth had no more sense of humor than a prairie-dog, and he was too dead in earnest to get mad.

"Really, Mr. Leveredge, I'd be glad to do it as—er—as a slight return for the services you and Mr. Lockwood have rendered."

"Why, I tell you, Saber-Tooth," says Sam, "the fact is we're going to get our price for the land. It's as good as sold. Still, if you want to probe around and crack a few rocks, go to it!"

We reached our place late in the afternoon and the Professor and I took a look around together—you bet it was together; I saw to that—while Sam got supper. I could see that Old Saber-Tooth was suffering because I was with him, so I kept up a running talk of how we got the property—there was no need to lie about that—how we'd planted things, what the soil analyzed and a lot of similar things in which he wasn't interested in the least.

He examined some of the rocks and made a bluff at a few other tests, but all the time he had his eye on the course of that measly bitter old stream and didn't dare let on. Finally we came to a greasy-looking patch of ground and Saber-Tooth stopped and sniffed. Then he dug up a handful of soil and smelled it.

"Bless me!" said he, "I believe that's oil!"

It was. You bet it was. Sam had spilled a five-gallon can of crude petroleum there the day before.

"Sure it is!" says I, with enthusiasm. "Didn't I tell you there was oil here? I reckon the parties that want this land know what they're about."

Well, we ambled back to camp for grub, and that evening Old Saber-Tooth didn't say much. Said it was too soon to give any judgment. Next morning Sam and I rolled out of our blankets just as the Professor dropped out of sight on his way to the stream, carrying our second-best frying-pan. We took a big drink apiece, with canned tomatoes for a chaser; then I went over to the Professor's war-bags, took out his touchstone and dug a hole and buried it.

"Now, Sam," says I, "we'll give him exactly an hour—no more. That touchstone test he made has him convinced, to be sure, but he's a pretty wise old geezer, and we can't afford to take any chances. We'll just allow him time to get interested and call him off."

So we loafed around for a while and took a few more drinks for luck. The sun was warm and the sky was blue. The little horned toads scurrying about looked plumb sociable and friendly. It was a pretty good old world!

Then we crawled along under cover, following the stream till we came in sight of Old Saber-Tooth. He was on his knees whirling that old pan around and around and when he poured out the top and looked at the residue with his lens we could fair see the unholy joy oozing out of him. We crawled back a ways and yelled. Believe me, sir, the sight of that spectacled old gentleman leaping high in air, like a startled fawn, and at the same time chucking pan and all out of sight, is a thing memory will always cherish as the most inspiring I have

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ever seen. Sam and I pretty near blew up, but we hollered: "Grub-pile, Professor!" and started back.

SABER-TOOTH came along, and we ate. Nobody said a word till it was over, except that Sam choked himself almost to death on baked beans three or four times. Old Saber-Tooth was studying some way to get back to that pan all alone, but he never got the chance. We took him between us and walked him all over the place talking oil, oil, oil, till he was played out. Once in a while we would cuss out that stream as the most useless watercourse under heaven, but we kept away from the pan, and then:

"Now, Professor, if it's all the same to you," says I, "we'll be hitting the trail to Bakersfield. Sam and I have a little business to transact."

"All right, boys," says he, with a happy smile. "I'll stay here a while and be along later. I am just beginning to be interested."

"Oh, all right, sir," I said. "It makes no odds to me; only the grub's all gone. Sam and I are going to sell this land to-night in Bakersfield. A certain party is about to come across at our terms, and we want to get it over and leave town as soon as possible. We've got to hit a fast clip to make Bakersfield before ten to-night."

That fetched him. We started, and when we had gone a mile or so I said:

"Now, sir, of course you've already formed your opinion. We expect to sell the land without delay, but we'd like to know. We'd hate to saw this land off on any one who didn't have your knowledge unless we were sure it was all on the level. There *is* oil there, isn't there?"

"From a cursory examination," he answered sagely, "it is hard to tell. The surface indications——"

Sam's face fell. "Why, sir, you can *smell* the oil. Maybe it's hard to tell, same as them little old coyotes——"

"Really, the truth is," said Saber-Tooth impatiently, "that I'm not interested in the oil-prospect. There *may* be oil there, and there may not. There are, I think, some interesting mineral possibilities, purely from a scientific standpoint. On the basis of this I will make you a perfectly fair offer. I will give you three thousand dollars for your property. Now, gentlemen, what do you think of that? Extremely liberal, is it not?" and he beamed on us, showing all his long, yellow teeth.

Sam and I looked away indifferently.

"Our price for that land," says I, slow and distinct, "is thirty-five thousand dollars."

Saber-Tooth nearly fell off his horse.

"Why—why, but this is preposterous!" he said.

Then he grew thoughtful.

"By the way—er—er—how many men have there been on that land to examine it?"

"I dunno," I answered. "The man we expect to sell it to must have examined it pretty thorough."

We rode on a few miles farther, Saber-Tooth muttering to himself.

"Thirty-five thousand dollars!" I heard him say. "H'm! H'm!" Then out loud he said, "I'll give you ten thousand!"

Sam and I jerked our ponies up all-standing and faced him.

"Now see here, Saber-Tooth," says Sam, in a hard, metallic voice. "That's about enough of this. What are you cutting in for? This is our business. We were hired by you to find and disinter the remains of saber-tooth tigers from the bowels of the earth; *not* to haggle with you over real estate. Your 'cursed examination' as you call it, seems to have put you wise to something, and if you are as wise as the other fellow you'll understand that our price is thirty-five thousand; not a cent less."

I handed him the paper Sam brought.

"Take a look at that, sir," says I. "It's only a memorandum, but it speaks for itself." The paper read:

I hereby rase the last bid made by me for yore land in this county or anny other bid not eksedin thirty thousand dolars the sum of three thousand dolars.

Thomas Desaules.

To D. Lockwood and S. Leveredge, agents.

"Thomas is an ignorant man," I went on, when he had read it twice, "but you see how the land lays. We're holding out for the extra two thousand, that's all."

Well, sir, we made him squirm to within five miles of town. By that time he had raised the ante to eighteen thousand and was still a-coming. Right there I dropped the rope of the pack-horse, who was loaded with tiger-bones, and Sam and I dug in the spurs and beat it for town. "So long, Saber-Tooth," Sam yelled over his shoulder—

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"So long, mah honey,
You ain't got no money——"

SABER-TOOTH had to pick up the rope, and I'll bet he was hot clear through, but he had plenty of time to cool off before he got to town. Sam and I washed up and were sitting in close conclave with Tommy Desaules and two other men when Saber-Tooth, all dusty and tired, came in.

There was a gleam in his owly eyes, though, as he tapped Sam and me on the shoulder.

"Gentlemen, a word with you in private, please," says he.

"Excuse us, Professor; never mind about the wages just now. We're very busy with Mr. Desaules. You know him, I think. Have a drink?"

"I must speak with you in private," Saber-Tooth went on, a heap breathless; "in your room, if you please."

"All right. Just wait here for us, Tommy. We'll be back in a moment," says I.

We took him to our room. He locked the door and that's pretty near the end of the story. We talked for an hour and he offered us four thousand in cash and the balance in a check on a bank in Los Angeles. He had the documents to show that his check was perfectly good, the old rip having about a hundred and fifty thousand, cold, on deposit. We had the deed with us, Tommy Desaules dug us up a lawyer, and we put the whole thing over. The owl-train for Los Angeles was due in about five hours.

I should say, at a venture, that Bakersfield has never been more crowded with action than it was during the subsequent five hours. Sam and I learned then what it actually means to be popular. Not only that, but we were popular with ourselves. We were very, very happy.

A crowd of well-wishers stayed awake to come down and see us off. Just before the train pulled out Tommy Desaules, very unsteady on his legs, took me aside.

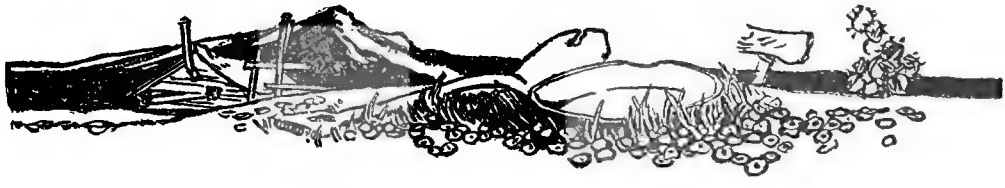
"Jus' one thing, Dave, my boy, before you go," says he gravely; "I un'stan' you put somethin' over on th' ole cuss, all right, all right; but what in Je—Jehoshaphat did Sam want with that ten pounds of brass filin's?"

"We sold 'em, Tommy—at a profit. We sold 'em for thirty-five thousand."

And then the train pulled out.

NOW, see here! I knew when I began that you'd end by thinking we were a couple of hold-ups. Scientific men that know it all are easy that way; and I ain't saying it was legitimate for Sam to salt that stream with brass-filings, nor pour out that oil, thus playing both ends against the middle; especially after trustful Old Saber-Tooth had made himself so cocksure with the acid test. No, I ain't saying that was just regular. I saw by the papers later on that the Professor made considerable fame out of his saber-tooth tigers, but—well, wait a minute!

You remember I told you that Sam and I needed some money for that land because the Japs and their agent had cleaned us out? I think I told you we were set back thirty-five thousand dollars. Well, the name of that Jap agent, who knew the language and had been an official in Japan for five years, was Professor Alonzo van Frelinghuysen, alias Old Saber-Tooth. We recognized it at once when we heard it in Tommy's shop. It isn't a name that's easy to forget, once you've heard it. See?



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THE CARDINAL'S SACK

A SIR JOHN HAWKWOOD STORY

By Marion Polk Angellotti

THERE lives, I suppose, no man so lucky but that his past holds some specter which at times rises to give him a most evil quarter of an hour. The accursed thing may have been of his deliberate planning, or he may have been no more to blame for it than an unborn babe. No matter, it torments him relentlessly, stinging like any gadfly.

The Duke of Padua, for example, once told me that in his bad dreams he never failed to see the white face of an unknown woman, glimpsed years before in a town he had burned; and I have heard my old leader the Black Prince say that he would well-nigh have parted with his splendid victories of Crécy and Poitiers, to wipe from his memory the affair at Limoges.

As for me, I am not squeamish about bloodshed and it is arrant foolishness in me to burden my conscience with a plot hatched by that mad tiger of a Genevan. Nevertheless——

It was long before I became Captain-General of Florence, this business; it was even before I sold my sword to Antonio della Scala, and first saw the Princess Giulia at his court.

Among my employers at this time the first and foremost was Roberto, the Cardinal-Count of Geneva, who ruled Cesena as papal legate; he has since become an anti-pope, cursed bell and book and candle. I fancy the most pious soul on earth will scarce pick a quarrel with me, if I tell you frankly that of all men I have known he was the worst—or, to put the truth even more forcibly, that he was as deformed in mind as in body, and resembled nothing else so much as a blood-mad beast.

Having enjoyed several opportunities for studying the characteristics of this personage, I was by no means anxious to live at close quarters with him. So I felt anything but gratified one Winter day at being bidden to bring my White Company to Cesena where I was to put it under his orders; this, because he had been terrified half out of his wits by a recent revolt of the Cesenese, and wanted, with a peaceable show of force, to prevent all chance of its repitition.

The statement, to be sure, was pacific enough. But I was not entirely prepared to accept it as Gospel truth. It was in a rather suspicious mood therefore that, having arrived at dusk and left my men in the fortress which they call La Murata, I presented myself at the palace with a demand for an audience.

For perhaps five minutes I was allowed to cool my heels in the antechamber. Then I was ushered into a room smothered in silks and velvets and reeking with perfumes. From the sudden hush that reigned on my appearance I felt tolerably sure that those within had been discussing no other subject than myself.

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There was, I perceived, quite a little party awaiting me. In a sort of chair of state sat the Count, a heavy dwarfed man with a short neck like a turtle's, a pair of glittering, baleful eyes, and a congested face well-nigh as purple as his robes.

Across the table from him, stuffing himself with sweetmeats, lounged the Signor Astorre Ravelli, a most unprepossessing young gentleman who was known as Roberto's nephew, but who was in build and feature so exact a replica of that worthy that most people credited them with a closer relationship.

Behind the latter's chair, engaged in the humane occupation of spitting flies with his dagger, stood a lean, wiry, brown-faced man in a soldier's dress, whom I promptly recognized as Malestoit, the Captain of the Breton mercenaries brought from Geneva by Count Robert.

"WELL, my lord, here I am. What is it I am to do for your service?" I asked rather unceremoniously; for I could scarce have found myself in a company less to my taste.

Except when such frankness might have endangered his own precious life, the Count, I imagine, was never known to shirk putting into good ringing words what most men would have blushed to whisper. At my question he thrust his head forward like a snake.

"You are to teach these Cesenese dogs what it means to threaten their ruler, Sir John Hawkwood," said he. "At ten of the clock, my friend, you are to fall on Cesena in concert with Messire Malestroit here, and administer justice—after which, you will complete the entertainment with a sack of the city."

Well, here we had the plain truth, at all events; and not to beat about the bush, it was very much what I had been dreading. Not for an instant did I doubt the nature of the justice to be administered. If Malestroit and his Bretons were entrusted with it, then the devil, who was their master, alone could tell what slaughter, burning, pillage, and rapine the unlucky town would see before to-morrow morning.

However, that was no affair of mine. The Cesenese had indulged in a revolt. Whatever their justification, it was not my business to parade about Italy interfering between subjects and their lords, and sooner or later get my throat cut for my pains. But if I was not a knight-errant, neither was I a butcher, and so I told Count Roberto with mighty little ceremony.

"I shall do no such thing, my lord," said I. "When I sold you my service, it was for war-making, not for massacres. If this is all you have to say to me, I will bid you good-night, and take my men back whence they came."

This bit of plain speaking, which rivaled the Count's own, entirely failed to ruffle him. "That will be as you choose, Sir John," said he. "I fancy the world holds no man who can boast of having forced you to do what you do not want to do, my friend. But if you go, no doubt I shall be murdered during to-night's affair by these Cesenese, who, I assure you, hate me madly. And I have always understood that Sir Hawkwood keeps faith with the men he serves!".

He had me there. I could have cursed aloud had I not known how such a display of temper would have gratified him. For while the saints knew that I did not regard the Count with any special fondness, and would indeed have taken some pleasure in flinging him to the Cesenese as one flings a bone to a pack of hungry dogs, still he was one of my employers, and it was my pride that, whatever else I had done, I had never yet been false to a bargain.

"Very good, my lord," I said grimly, in the end. "For once in my life I will do nothing either to help or hinder. I will stand with my hands in my waist-belt, guarding your palace. As for the pillaging of the town, I dare say my men will be ready enough to oblige you in that, and surely there is no reason why we should not have some of the spoils as well as Malestroit's Bretons. But in the killing they will take no part.

"And if you want my opinion, here it is without the trouble of asking for it—you are a pack of cutthroats, the three of you, and when our bargain expires next month, the deuce take me if I do not break forever with you and all your kind!"

If I had flattered myself that my benediction would make them put themselves in temper, I had been mistaken. Signor Astorre munched his comfits stolidly as he looked at me with small, unblinking eyes. Malestroit grinned and informed me that since I had suddenly become scrupulous about bloodshed, he felt quite competent

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to deal unassisted in that part of the business. As for the Count, he fairly beamed.

"Faith, you wrong us, my good friend," said he. "If we were cutthroats, would we want to kill every one in Cesena? And we do not. On the contrary, I give you my word that for two days past I have had a strong Breton guard quartered in the outer part of the convent of Santa Reparata, so that whatever chances, the good sisters may come to no harm."

Though I could detect no particular wit in the remark, for some inscrutable reason it proved highly amusing to the others; for Malestroit shook with mirth, and even Signor Astorre indulged in a stupid grin. But I certainly did not intend to waste much time in pondering over the mystery.

"Then I wish the ladies joy of their defenders," I retorted. "For my part, I would as soon open my doors to a pack of wolves."

Feeling that another instant in the room would be death to me, I favored them with the curtest of salutations, and turned on my heel.

IT WAS in a mood of savage helplessness that I gave the palace my back and set out slowly toward La Murata. For while I had salved my conscience as well as I could by informing the count that in another month he would see the last of me, still I was well aware that my declaration had not saved me from becoming more or less mixed up in the black business, and would not spare me the necessity of witnessing some very unpleasant scenes during the next few hours.

Indeed, even at the present moment it was a by no means exhilarating experience to walk through the town, which already appeared suspicious that there was something sinister in the wind.

The Breton mercenaries were abroad in flocks, ruffling it everywhere, and talking loudly of what they would do when it should finally please the Count to give them their will of the city. One was planning the sack of a certain goldsmith's shop. Another meant to pounce, like a cat on a mouse, upon the house of a mercer he knew, who had both a store of rich silks and a handsome wife. And as these intentions were aired quite openly, I was not much surprised that doors and windows were barred as if for a siege, or that the few honest folk that ventured abroad had white faces and scuttled along like thieves.

My journey proved sufficiently uneventful until it brought me into a winding, dimly lighted street not far from La Murata. Then of a sudden, events began to march.

From a great stone house to the left of me, barred and shuttered and to all appearances as deserted as a tomb, there rang out such a shriek as made me start. Before the echo had time to die, a door was flung violently open, and out of it catapulted in headlong flight a white-haired fellow in servant's livery, closely pursued by a trooper who wore on his sleeve the Breton badge.

"Come back, you old fool! Do you want your tongue cut out? Do you want to lose your eyes, your heart?"

The Breton was panting furiously. But I must say the words had singularly little effect, for on the very heels of them his quarry gave vent to such a roar as might have waked the dead.

"Help there!" he shouted. "Help for my master!"

The incident stirred my curiosity. Whatever might chance after ten of the clock, at present the town was supposed to be at peace. If some of these Bretons were indulging in any premature mischief inside the darkened house, I was in the very mood to spoil their sport. Before pursuer or pursued knew what had occurred, I had thrust myself between them.

"Well, what is all this uproar about your master?" I demanded, while both gasped at me open-mouthed.

The servant—an honest, faithful soul he looked, though half-crazed with fright—was the first to get back his senses.

"They were torturing him," he cried frantically. "They are murdering him. Ah, *signore*, whoever you may be, save my young master from the Bretons!"

Perceiving that there was no time to be lost, I acted in a hurry. My first move was to catch the still bewildered trooper by the neck and hurl him out into the street. Then, with scarce greater ceremony, I flung the old servant back through the open doorway, and, springing after him into what seemed a pitch-black void, I threw the door to and bolted it on the inner side.

"Now, my man," said I, "lead me as quietly as you can to these Bretons of yours."

Perhaps because of the fashion in which I had handled his foe the trooper, the rogue

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seemed to have been inspired with a flattering confidence in me.

"Heaven reward you, *signore!*" he cried fervently, though what I had done for him so far, save to fling him indoors like a bag of meal, it would have been hard to guess.

We were now, I fancied, in a sort of hall. Making use of both my eyes and ears, I distinguished at the further end what might have been a gleam of light escaping from under a door, and caught the muffled sound of voices and brutal laughter. My guide, setting himself obediently in motion, crept before me in this direction.

"Now, *signore*, in the name of the saints!" he breathed, and swung the door softly open.

THE scene thus revealed to me was, I am sorry to say, only too common a one in cities where mercenaries are given a free rein. Disorder ruled everywhere, turning to topsy-turvy confusion what had recently been a splendid room. Rich tapestries had been torn from the walls and flung on the floor. Carpets were rolled in bales. Gold cups and plates lay piled in a great glittering heap.

In the center of the chamber, bound hand and foot to the back of a high chair, was a young man in a rich velvet dress. Grouped about him was a circle of half-drunk Bretons, one of whom was holding a torch so close to the victim's fingers that the flames almost licked them.

"Will you speak, eh? Will you guide us to your treasure-chest?" this latter kindly soul was vociferating. "Ha, you will not say a word? You will not turn your eyes this way? Well, we have tamed a few haughty spirits in our time. And when we have singed a finger or two from your hand, your tongue may wag a bit more freely."

Of that I was not sure; for while the Breton mercenaries were certainly as great adepts at making the dumb speak as the world held, still there was about their victim a look of resolve which made me consider their success very doubtful. He was a strongly built young man, not above five-and-twenty, and handsome enough in a dark, rather fierce fashion. From the first I took something of a liking to him, and as he was obviously no coward, I was not ill-pleased that his lucky stars had sent me to him at this precise moment.

"Not so fast, my friend!" said I from the door. "Under whose orders, pray, are you acting in this affair?"

The demand created a sensation. Wheeling about with a chorus of oaths, they stared at me as at an apparition.

Since the life I have led has given me the air of a person of some consequence, I think no man there took me for one at whose authority he might kiss his fingers. Nevertheless, the fellow who appeared to be their leader confronted me with considerable boldness.

"Faith, *signore*, we need no orders to enter here," he cried with a drunken hiccough. "All Cesena knows that this gentleman is the sworn foe of Signor Astorre Ravelli. We shall put neither the Count nor our Captain in a temper by any ill turn we do him, so long as we do it discreetly, behind closed doors."

"For the present," I said dryly, "we will let the Count and your Captain alone, and consider myself. My name is John Hawkwood. If you know anything about me, you are aware that what I command is commonly done. Now, I order you to take yourselves out of this house. Will you do it, or am I to give you a lesson in swordplay?"

The attitude I had assumed was certainly a bit rash, but it met with a result most gratifying to my vanity, for the troopers, one and all, immediately fell back from me in a sort of awed reverence.

"Yes, it is he. It is Sir John Hawkwood himself—I saw him once, in Faenza. We had best be stirring ourselves, if he bids us," the leader muttered to his comrades. Forthwith he saluted me and led the way toward the door as meekly as a mouse, the others following him in a sheepish fashion. An instant later the door closed behind them, and I found myself in undisputed possession of the field.

Rather dazed by the ease with which the matter had adjusted itself, I turned back into the room, where I found a radically altered situation awaiting me. That old servant had, apparently, no sooner seen me engage the attention of the troopers than he had improved the heaven-sent opportunity of cutting his master's bond, and the latter was now standing at my side.

"We Cesenese are not used to acts of kindness from our oppressors, Sir John Hawkwood," said he, somewhat defiantly,

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and as if it went against the grain with him to take a service from me. "We have lost, I fear, the art of thanks, and grown more used to uttering curses. But since for once a soldier has shown such charity as to save a Cesenese from torture, I, Giuliano Ricciardi, thank you for the condescension."

Had I not already set him down for a man driven half-mad by some wrong, I should certainly have lost my temper at this by no means civil attitude. Even as it was, I felt a trifle nettled.

"Upon my word, *signore*," I commented, "I am sorry to have mixed myself up in an affair where I seem so little welcome. You must have lived a hard life indeed, so to cock your hat at the world at your age."

He confronted me with a fierce white face and burning eyes.

"Had you lived as hard a one," he cried passionately, "you might be a bit soured yourself. I have heard it said that you are an honest man, Sir John Hawkwood. Very good—listen to what I shall tell you, and see if you feel wonder that I do not love the Count's followers.

"A MONTH ago I was as happy a man as the earth holds. I was a Cesenese noble. I had lands and gold. I was betrothed to Madonna Maria del Rosso, the most beautiful lady in the town, whom I loved with all my heart.

"Then that vile spawn of Count Roberto's, Signor Astorre Ravelli, heard talk of Madonna Maria's beauty. He came uninvited to a feast at her father's house; he set his evil eyes on her. Since that moment he has been wild for her. He has followed her everywhere. He has tortured her till she has been mad with terror.

"Her father and brother vowed vengeance, and led the late revolt. I waited for Astorre Ravelli in the public square, and challenged him to fight me. The foul coward motioned to his troopers, and they closed about him and cut me off!

"This chanced two days since. That night I took Madonna Maria to the Convent of Santa Reparata, that she might be safe until I could gather together my gold and jewels, and fly with her to Rimini, where we both have kinsmen. Yesterday, at dusk, I went to fetch her.

"Can you guess what I found? The Count has set a guard of Bretons in the convent. They hold every entrance. They let no one go in or out, under some lying pretext of keeping the place safe. But it is not for good that they are there. It is for ill—and Madonna Maria is in their very midst, caught like a bird in a trap."

"Now, by the saints!" I cried, staring at him. "You have made one or two things clear to me by that long speech, my friend."

For I was recalling, as you will doubtless guess, Count Roberto's farewell words to me about the guarded convent. He had taken part in sacks before, this Count; and as I had never heard that in them he had shown religious houses any more mercy than worldly ones, I fancied I did him no great injustice in imagining that he would readily enough let a convent be plundered to oblige his beloved Signor Astorre, if the latter happened to have set his heart on a lady who had taken sanctuary there.

The Breton guard had been quartered in Santa Reparata ostensibly to keep invaders out, in reality to keep this unlucky girl within. Once the sack began, she would be whisked off to the palace and Signor Astorre, and then—Heaven help her! In the confusion that would reign, she would be lost to those who knew her, like a leaf in a whirlpool; and the convent itself, with all its famous treasures, would doubtless be given over to the Bretons for their plundering.

Such, I felt certain, was the plot. The heavy, evil face of Astorre Ravelli seemed to rise before me, and I began to be very doubtful whether, after all, my waist-belt was the proper place for my hands to remain that night.

"Are there many women in the convent, beside the nuns?" I asked shortly of young Ricciardi.

"Ay, there are!" he cried, fiercely. "In the past week they have feared a sack, and have hurried there by the scores—noble ladies, tradesmen's wives, women of all sorts. They took their gold, their jewels, their rich robes with them. And now they can not get out. They are imprisoned with all their treasures, a very harvest for these mercenaries, if some mischief is afoot." He glared at me as indignantly as if I were responsible for it all.

For some time I reflected. Then I spoke again.

"Signor Giuliano, if that is your name," said I, "take a warning by me, and never oblige a man if you can help it. I began, as you know, by doing you a small service,

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and now I see nothing for it but to do you a greater one, at considerable risk of getting my throat slit.

"Listen to me; are you willing to muster a hundred men of your own sort, men who have wives and sisters in the convent yonder and bring them secretly to me at La Murata, at nine of the clock? If you trust me at all, you must do it blindly. I can tell you not a word more. But I pledge you my honor that either I will not live out the night, or I will do you such a service as will make you remember me in your prayers to the end of time!"

For a long minute he stared fiercely at me, as if to read my very soul. Then he bowed his head with a sort of desperate resolve.

"I will do it, Sir John Hawkwood," he said in a low voice. "I will trust you. And if you betray me, then I will think there is no faith left in all the world!"

II

THE Convent of Santa Reparata, as all who have been at Cesena will recall, is in the center of the Street of the Three Fountains, midway between La Murata and the palace. A mighty square pile of gray stone, it has somewhat the air of a fortress, and undoubtedly it was garrisoned like one that night when, some five scant minutes before the hour of ten o'clock, I rode down the street with a troop of my best horsemen and halted at its door.

My evening had proved to be extremely busy, for since I had undertaken the arduous task of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, I found myself saddled with such a variety of responsibilities as made my head whirl. Faithless as Count Roberto was, I meant to keep faith with him to the extent of guarding his safety, and to that end I had sent perhaps a third of my company to watch the palace, under the command of my second officer, Robert Brice. Another third of the men I had posted at the various gates. Of the remaining division a half held La Murata, while the other half would accompany me on what was likely to prove no pleasure-jaunt.

With commendable promptness, Signor Giuliano Ricciardi had brought me his friends at nine o'clock precisely—a little company of men of good houses, all so embittered by the Count's tyranny that, had that great man chanced to appear suddenly in their midst, Cesena's wrongs would have been wiped out on the spot, and in very short order. As preparations for the evening's diversions were now going forward in a fairly lively fashion, these visitors of mine had of course seen enough on the street to guess that something out of the ordinary was afoot; and when I received them in the fortress-hall, Signor Giuliano, as spokesman for the rest, promptly began to ask me a maddening series of questions which I had no intention of answering.

"What villainy is brewing, Sir John? What new wrong is to be done us, in the name of the saints?" he cried. "Every soldier in Cesena is abroad. The gates are closed and guarded. The city is trembling. It seems that you are our one friend; will you not tell me what all this means?"

"No, I will not. That was not our bargain," I said shortly. "Understand, *signori*, that I did not summon you here to chatter, on a night when we are all risking our lives on the fall of the dice. What I want is your word of honor that every man of you will remain here until I return. More hangs on it than you can dream, my friends. Have I your pledge?"

In a bewildered fashion they gave me the assurance I wanted and seated themselves about the hall, pale and desperate, to keep vigil until my reappearance. When men of such a sort pledge their words, a matter is settled. Though I knew they would be sorely tempted before long, I wasted no more worry upon them as I left the fortress.

I had set about my business none too soon. Already the streets were swarming with mercenaries. The alarm was to be given at ten, by the ringing of the church-bells; and, lest they should be taken unawares and lose the richest prizes, the Bretons were grouping themselves in ominous quiet about great houses, shops and the like. As for the Cesenese, one and all were indoors, shaking behind bolts and bars which would do them small good in a little time.

The thought of the coming butchery of these poor wretches sickened me. I was glad enough to reach the street before the convent, where I dismounted from my horse, and, giving my bridle to one of my men, advanced to the gate and pounded vigorously upon it with my sword-hilt.

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"Ho! Within there!" I shouted, at the top of my lungs.

For an instant there was silence. Then the wicket was opened, not by one of the good sisters, but by a villainous-faced Breton who favored me with a most inhospitable scowl.

"No need to wake the dead, *signore*," he growled by the way of greeting. "Well, and what is it you want?"

"Nothing from rogues like you," I retorted contemptuously. "But a word with your officer. Tell him that Sir John Hawkwood is at the gate, with a message from the Count!"

Considerably to my relief, the man's face altered at once.

"Your pardon, Sir John. Never before have I had the honor of seeing you. Do but wait an instant," he exclaimed, and vanished with alacrity.

He was gone, I suppose, no more than the time he had mentioned, but the moments at my disposal were now growing perilously few, and it seemed to me that I waited an eternity before he reappeared.

"Enter, Sir John Hawkwood!" he bade me, with a cordiality in marked contrast with his former churlishness, as he flung the gate wide.

HAD I been brought blindfold into the outer court of that convent, I would certainly, when the bandage was removed, have supposed myself in a camp. A fire had been kindled in the center of the stone pavement. Arms were piled on all sides. The place swarmed with men who looked as unlikely inhabitants for a holy abode as fancy could have devised.

As for my entrance, it increased rather than diminished the warlike aspect of the scene, for my troopers followed at my very heels. The sight of them seemed to rouse a good deal of alarm both in the Bretons and their officer.

"Save us, Sir John!" the latter cried as he met me. "What on earth is amiss, that you descend on us in such force?"

For a moment I stood measuring him. I had seen him before, in Malestroit's train, though I had never had speech with him in my life. A stout, rather easy-going brute, he was a magnificent fighter, and fought whenever bidden, like a good dog. But among his gifts shrewdness was certainly not one. Moreover, he possessed a colossal vanity which might make him an easy dupe.

Knowing all this, I felt tolerably sure that he was not sufficiently in his Captain's secret counsels to have been informed how emphatically I had declined to take part in the coming massacre. On the contrary, it was more than likely that he supposed me hand in glove with both Malestroit and the Count.

"What is amiss, do you ask?" I said, with a sort of portentous briskness. "Enough, Heaven knows, Messire Guitard—that is your name, I think?"

"Aye, Sir John, Guitard," he assured me fatuously, plainly charmed that I should have recalled as much.

"Well, my friend," I explained hastily, "the fat is in the fire with a vengeance, and we must put our heads together in a hurry if we mean to pull it out! Will you believe it? Not a half-hour since there arrived in Cesena a mounted messenger from his Holiness the Pope, who has got wind of to-night's affair and sent a command that this convent, which in some fashion is under his protection, shall be protected at all costs from every peril!"

How on earth that excellent man the Pope could have learned of the projected business in a manner so timely, or why, having learned of it, he had not bidden the Count to give up the whole of the bloody plan instead of merely a portion of it, were fortunately points too subtle for Guitard's slow-moving intelligence to grasp.

"Heaven save us all!" was the extent of what he could find to say, staring at me the while with round eyes of bewilderment.

"The Count is the Pope's servant. He may not ignore a command," I pointed out with growing assurance. "But then, too, he has promised you good folk the sack of the convent, and it is his wish to keep faith in the matter. So he and I together have formed a plan which I think few would have hit upon."

And here I assumed an air of great self-complacency.

"Now, on the instant, I am to convey to La Murata all the women within these walls. As for the convent itself, with its gold and tapestries and jewels, I dare say you will know how to deal with that once it stands untenanted—and Count Roberto will inform the Pope that though the dregs of his force rebelled against their leaders and

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sacked Santa Reparata, his trusty Bretons saved the nuns, and brought them to safe refuge!"

The delighted laughter which rose all about me at this conceit was ample proof that the liberties I had taken with Roberto's name had fully justified themselves.

"A rare idea, Sir John! A good jest!" rejoiced that imbecile Guitard, laughing louder than the loudest. "Ah, he is a good master, the Count. He never forgets his Bretons!"

"My faith, no. There are indeed few like him," said I; which was true enough in one sense, if not in another. "And now, my friend, where is the Abbess? I have a message from the Count for her private ear, which will make her accompany me without too much womanish foolery."

"They are in yonder, Sir John, every woman-jill of them—the Abbess, Signor Astorre's lady, and all the rest," said Guitard. "Saints, but it is a pity they must leave us! We had thought that of the whole spoil of the convent, they would be the cream. Well, there are flies in all honey, I suppose. Enter, Sir John, and good luck go with you."

ON HIS last word he waved me importantly toward the inner door; and with a pæan of thanksgiving in my heart I swung it open, passed through it, and drew it shut behind me.

For a moment after entering the inner cloister I could make out no more than that it was a somewhat sepulchral-looking place, lighted by a guttering torch or two. I stood still, just inside the threshold, peering about me. Presently my sight cleared, and I looked on a strange enough scene.

There were women everywhere. The dim place was full of them, lying on the marble steps and in the porticoes, crouched on the pavement, propped against the walls. Some wore nun's robes, to be sure, but for the most part they were as fine as queens in their green and blue and scarlet silks, and the glitter of their gold and jewels.

Here, plainly, was the pick of Cesena's great ladies, cut off from every defender, at the mercy of a pack of Bretons who were as veritable fiends as the earth held. The saints pity them, if I had not come to their assistance! And we were not out of the woods yet. The thought steadied me, and made me lose no time in setting about what remained to be done.

"Let some one fetch the Abbess," I said, in as matter-of-fact a tone as I could muster, "and tell her that Sir John Hawkwood wants a word with her at once."

I must pay these women the compliment of saying that they were no cravens. Though my entrance had brought them all up to their feet with pale, tense faces—I suppose they charitably credited me with being the first of their butchers—not a cry escaped from one of them. On my request they drew silently apart for the advance of a tall, elderly, somewhat harsh-featured woman, who transfixed me with as forbidding an eye as I ever encountered.

"Behold me, *signore*. What is your will, that you enter a place where the presence of men is forbidden by our strictest rules?" she asked, apparently by no means inclined to make an exception in my favor.

"Faith, reverend mother," I responded bluntly, "they stand a poor chance to-night, these rules of yours! In a minute, when the bells ring, there will be men aplenty hereabout to sack the convent, and unless you vanish in a hurry you will form the lion's share of the spoils. So let me ask that you will waste no time in following me to a safer spot."

My speech had considerably less success than I could have wished. In fact, if you will believe it, the Abbess glared at me like any catamount.

"Thank you, *signore*. I fancy we will be safer where we are, protected by the guard sent us by the Count," she informed me, with a good deal of suspicion.

I could have shaken the woman. Here I was, risking all for a doubtful result, performing prodigies to get her and her following out of danger—and she suspected me, and preferred to pin her faith to Messire Guitard!

"You think so, eh?" I asked grimly. "Do you know the orders under which they have acted for two days past, these Bretons? There is to be a sack of the town to-night—doubtless it is beginning while we talk—and as soon as the alarm sounds, the mercenaries outside are bidden to give over the convent to plunder, and to carry off Madonna Maria del Rosso to the palace, where Signor Astorre Ravelli is awaiting her most impatiently. Is she here, that lady? Then in the name of the saints let her come for-

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ward, and look at this ring which her betrothed sends her as a sign that I speak the truth."

I had obtained the jeweled signet from young Ricciardi before we parted at the house. As it now proved, my precaution was destined to save the day. On the instant a slender, darkly beautiful young girl in a red robe disengaged herself from the others, ran forward, and bent over the ring.

"It is true, reverend mother," she cried, falling back with a white face. "That is Signor Giuliano's seal. Oh, we are all betrayed. Let us follow this honest gentleman, for surely he is our one hope."

Humiliating as it was to owe my victory to a gold band rather than to my own frantic efforts, I was too glad of it on any terms to quarrel with it.

"Bless you for a woman of sense, madonna!" I cried fervently. "Now, are you all ready to accompany me? I see by your white cheeks that you are, so make haste. The saints you pray to know that we have little time to spare."

I strode to the door, flung it open, and motioned them forth.

IT HAD been my plan to have them safely at the fortress before the alarm rang out, but the gulling of Messire Guitard and the persuading of the Abbess had taken too many precious minutes. Even as I stood with my hands on the door I heard a distant bell begin a dull, ominous tolling. Then, on the instant it seemed, bells sprang to life everywhere, ringing from all four quarters of the heaven at once.

There was something appalling about the iron clamor and what it heralded. I felt small astonishment that the women cried out and gave back. But already I had wasted too much time in humoring them. I turned on them now with a fierceness that shocked them into obedience.

"Do you want to have your throats cut—yes, and worse?" I shouted, herding them relentlessly through the narrow door. "Do you want to be the sport of the Count's Bretons, the worst mercenaries on earth, whose doings make the whole world shudder? Then shriek, wring your hands, lose only an instant more! But if you want to be saved from such horrors as you have never dreamed, then act, and swiftly!"

They were out in the court at last, a splendid, bedizened crowd, swaying to and fro in the torchlight, their white faces showing ghastly above their finery. My men promptly closed about them in a mounted circle. All together we surged through the outer gate into the street.

"Farewell, Messire Guitard!" I shouted, waving my hand to that worthy, as I caught a last glimpse of him staring after me from among his men.

All I now had to do was to get my convoy safely to La Murata. But this was easier said than done. Every street in the town was now seething with murderers and ringing with the shrieks of the inhabitants. Such a tumult reigned that it seemed as if the world had gone mad. I have seen bloody battles in my time, and I can recall them calmly, but when I think of the sights I saw that night I shudder and close the eyes of my memory. If you want to know more of the Cesena massacre, go look for it in history, which has set it down to Roberto's account. But do not look to have me tell you about it, for there are things it sickens a strong man only to recall.

Luckily for me, I had not much time to spend in watching what went on about my troop. My hands were more than full with the work of breaking a way through that sea of blood-mad men. I had under my guard the very prizes these cutthroats were abroad to seek—gold, jewels, beautiful women.

For a little time I thought that the end would be upon us before we had gone a hundred feet. But my troopers held like an iron wall. As for me, I rode at the very end of the company, turning my horse so that I faced the howling rabble at our heels.

"Back, you dogs!" I cried again and again. "Do you think you can throw dice with me, with John Hawkwood? You will know better before the night is over. Back, I tell you, unless you want to die."

It was a strange scene, that. I can close my eyes and see it yet—the glittering little throng, the line of grim horsemen that fringed it, and about us the mob, trampled under the hoofs of our mounts, going down before our swords. The nuns were praying. Some of the other women had begun to sob. But for the most part they walked in the silence of dull horror.

Now at last, however, we were nearing our journey's end. The great gray mass of the fortress loomed up before us. Now the

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bridge was being lowered to give us entrance. We made one final gasping effort, drove through what remained of the rabble as a knife goes through bread, and were safe in the courtyard of the fortress, with our pursuers howling fury at us from across the moat!

FOR a moment, after I had dismounted, I stood leaning against the wall and panting, for I confess that the diversion just past had been a livelier one than I would care to undertake as a common thing. Nevertheless, I was in a fairly complacent mood as I gazed about me. My little company of Cesenese nobles had emerged from within-doors at our appearance; the dark-eyed girl in the red robe was sobbing in young Ricciardi's arms, and a large number of the other women had found a similar refuge.

Undeniably my night's excursion had been a success so far. But I must not forget that something still remained to be done.

"Come, *signori*, stir yourselves!" I cried lustily, striding forward. "I have done what I can for you. Now work a bit in your own behalf! Off with you through the hall to the rear of the fortress, where one of my officers will tell you what is to follow."

"But first, Sir John, let me give you thanks!" cried Signor Giuliano, advancing; and his comrades following him, in so obviously emotional a mood that I felt they must be discouraged at once.

"Heaven pity us!" I cried. "Will you lose all we have gained, to stand there babbling? I will take your gratitude for granted, my friends. Or, better still, you may show it by doing as I bid you, and on the instant."

On the last word I fairly drove them toward the door. Then, seeing them upon their way, I turned back to meet one of my men who had just run up, apparently bursting with news.

"It is Malestroit, Sir John!" he cried. "It is the Breton Captain. He is outside with a troop of his men. They are shouting for admittance as if they had gone mad."

"Let them!" said I, with a shrug. "They have come a bit too late. Nor will they get speech with us before morning, either. It will do them no harm to spend a few hours in pondering what is going forward within our walls. For at least they are doomed to go hungry, I think, these vultures of the Count's!"

When I reached the palace at an hour after sunrise the next day, I was not kept waiting in the antechamber as I had been on the previous night. On the contrary I was hustled into Roberto's presence by his terrified servants with a haste that proved he had been awaiting my coming in no even mood. The room was as sumptuous and as perfumed as before. The party awaiting me was, to a man, the same as on the former occasion. But it was all too plain that since my last appearance a tornado had raged.

Roberto, leaning back in his great chair, looked positively worn with fury. That agreeable being, Astorre Ravelli, had evidently been at grips with a fit of insane anger, for his eyes were bloodshot and there were traces of foam on his lips. As for Malestroit, it was evident that he had not been entirely a gainer by the night's events, for he wore one arm in a sling, had a stained bandage around his head, and, finally, looked as if he would have chosen to be anywhere on earth rather than in the spot where he now found himself.

"Good-day to you, my lord. I have come for your thanks, since surely if ever a man earned them I am he!" I said with an air of brisk cheerfulness, as I came forward.

At this lively greeting the three of them stared at me, dumfounded. Then Roberto took the word, and in no uncertain fashion.

"Our thanks! It is likely, that!" he raged. "You have earned them, I suppose, by carrying off the women from Santa Reparata, placing them in the fortress, and holding them there all the night?"

"To be sure. How else?" I demanded, gasping as if in the utmost bewilderment. "Upon my word, my lord, I must say that you do not seem very grateful. Was it not your last word to me yesterday that whatever chanced, it was your will that no harm should touch the worthy sisters? Well, I learned that a plot was afoot to seize the convent and all its inmates; I got to horse, I rushed to Santa Reparata, and, zealous as always in your service, I saved every nun there for you at imminent risk of my own life. Now I can tell you of it, and if looks could kill, I would be a dead man. Another time, I think, I will spare myself any such pains."

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UNDOUBTEDLY my lord the Count had shrewd wits. He saw at once the pit his own words had dug for him, mastered himself with a violent effort, and addressed me again with a friendly smile.

"I perceive, Sir John," he said, "that I have done you great injustice. You have served me well, as always. Forgive me—and since my palace is an even safer spot than La Murata, do me one more favor by conducting these good ladies here."

"While I would do much for you, my lord, I can not do that," I informed him, "for the working of miracles is not among my gifts. When the women entered La Murata last night, they did not dally long, but passed promptly out the rear door of the fortress, which, as you know, adjoins the southern gate. By now, I fancy, they are in Rimini."

Signor Astorre uttered a choked cry and fell forward on the table. As for Roberto, for a minute I think he contemplated the idea of adding to the Cesena massacre a final victim in the person of myself. But before he could take any steps toward this end the saving recollection came to him that the palace was full of my men, and if he tried to have my life, I would probably end by having his.

"Sir John Hawkwood," he said at last, in a shaking voice, "I find that I need your service no more. Do me the favor to gather your men together, and to return to Faenza at once."

"With all my heart, my lord!" I cried, obstinately cheerful. "I am not anxious to remain in a town where such butchery as last night's is done, I can tell you, and within a half-hour I will have shaken the dust of Cesena from my feet!"

And that, I am glad to say, was the last I ever saw of the Count, who was shortly afterward cast off by the Pope for his bloody deed, and lived in future as a rebel to the Church he had served so ill. But though I would have given much to do so, I could not part so easily with my recollections of my night in Cesena. At times those sights still rise before me—white faces, running blood, littered bodies. Then I hug as my one shred of comfort the thought that, had I been elsewhere, matters would assuredly have gone no whit better, and in some ways at least would have gone a good deal worse.

A FIRE-HUNT AT KIVU

By Capt. Fritz Duquesne

ONE of the greatest elephant-hunts I ever witnessed I participated in in the northeast-central region of the Congo Free State, between Senga, a Belgian trading post, and Lake Kivu. For ruthless destruction it beat anything I hope ever to see.

Although I commenced by joining the hunt, I really became a spectator after a short time. Unlike most elephant-hunts, it was not conducted for ivory. It was for a more useful purpose, according to African opinion, for it was for food. Of course the ivory had its value, and as I was on the spot I hoped to make a nice sum by purchasing it.

Elephants have a habit of migrating

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from one part of the country to another in herds of from five to one hundred. It is indeed strange that, as if by arrangement, all the elephants in the north start on a long march south, or *vice versa*, very often with no apparent reason. I have been passed by twenty herds in a week, all moving south.

The way they march is peculiarly intelligent; the young and weak elephants, even if they are weakened through age, are crowded in the center, and the members of the herd that are at the height of their vigor and have all their fighting powers march on the outside. Some will even scout out a considerable distance ahead and on the slightest sign of danger give the unmistakable signal of alarm, which is a short, sharp, trumping snort.

The hunt in question took place in the middle of the dry season which, in that district, commences in May, and is at its height about the end of June. Lookout towers were built in the open country and native watchers occupied them nights as well as days. For at night the elephants can be heard.

After some days natives from the northern villages that were not then at war with the men of the Senga country—who are notorious cannibals and much feared—came in with the news that a number of large herds were on the way south.

There was much rejoicing on the part of the natives, for there had been so many wars during the last year that human flesh had become cheap and was no longer considered a luxury by the fastidious natives, who really like a variety in their food. A change at least once a year is considered necessary.

One morning my "boy" called me from my hammock and informed me with a great show of glee that the elephants were coming. I jumped for my arms and joined the throngs of excited natives who were collected in clusters, getting orders from their chiefs.

THE GATHERING FOR THE HUNT

SPEARS with razor-edges were glistening in the sun, and rifles and arrows were prepared for the hunt. Torches were made; earthenware jars were filled with burning charcoal and carried by each native taking part in the hunt. With these the grass was to be set afire.

At the edge of the forest that skirted the open *veld* at least three thousand natives from different villages collected by appointment. Men who had recently been fighting each other and eating each other's relations greeted one another with apparent friendship. Under instructions from the chiefs, the natives formed in parties of from five to nine; then without more ado their glistening naked forms vanished into the grass, which was from ten to twelve feet in height. I ascended a tree, on the top of which there was a platform built by the native hunters for a lookout.

As far as I could see there were signs of native watch-towers but not an elephant in sight, although the dull appearance of the high grass was broken here and there by multi-colored herds of antelope and quaggas. All day I waited, even eating my food up in the tree, but not a sign of the quarry did I glimpse.

I went to my hammock that night somewhat disappointed. To add to my annoyance I could hear the dull monotone of the native women witch-doctors praying for a successful hunt to a hideous fetish that was set up not far from my hut.

At sunrise my "boy" woke me. After a hearty meal of *biltong* (dried meat) I made my way to the lookout-platform at the edge of the forest.

An extraordinary sight greeted my vision. As far as my eye could reach, the huge forms of elephants, which looked really stately in their surroundings, could be seen strolling carelessly through the high, brown, withered grass. Through my glasses I could see them flapping their huge ears and swinging their trunks to keep away the numberless insects that attack every living thing in that region. Not a sign could I detect of the native hunters.

The sun had passed the zenith and was sliding down the heavens to the west when, at a rough estimate, I could see with the aid of my glasses at least from six to eight hundred elephants before me on the *veld*, yet no sign of the native hunters.

The day was three-quarters gone when a slight breeze sprung up and rocked the golden grass-tops to and fro. Far away in every direction, curling toward the blue sky, a circle of silver smoke ascended. This was the first sign of the attack. The fires described a circle of perhaps five miles

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in diameter. In a half-hour the smoke on the horizon increased to clouds and I could plainly see the fire eating its way through the dry, inflammable grass.

The elephants nearest the fiery circumference commenced to show signs of alarm. With increased pace they moved toward the center of the slowly narrowing circle.

THE FIRE ALLY

THROUGH the smoky atmosphere I could see the sun like a gigantic ball of burnished copper sink behind the gray-blue mountains beyond the forest. The short tropical twilight lingered over the land. Then all of a sudden darkness, with a startling contrast, enveloped *veld* and forest.

Far off, north, south, east and west, glared and danced the red, spear-pointed flames above the advancing fire-ranks, first galloping this way and then that at the caprice of the whipping winds.

Slowly the fire advanced. Smaller and more brilliant grew the terrible, livid circle. Outside the inner ring of fire, which grew smaller every minute, there was another traveling in the opposite direction and growing larger, for the fire was burning through the high grass towards a center and away from it.

About midnight, when the smoke had become suffocating, animals of every description, hastened by fear, bolted past the tree in which I was perched. Here and there appeared a rhinoceros, shoving its young ahead, grunting in its exertions. Crowds of wart-hogs, elands, quaggas, wildebeest, kudu, gemsbok, everything, went thundering by like a wild cavalry charge, which lasted well toward morning.

Lions and leopards skulked past, their eyes flaming with the reflected light from the fire, which had made a lake of red in the somber sky. The sight fascinated me. It was terrible, brutal. I felt like a fiend watching destruction in some long-past epoch. Then my heart swelled and a sadness almost tearful filled my being when I thought of the horrific brutality of it all.

I was deep in contemplation of the scene, almost forgetting it in the chaos of the thoughts it excited, when a hand touched me on the shoulder. I started, and turning saw the red eyes and gleaming teeth of my faithful "boy."

"The chief says you must come away from here. This tree may be torn down by the charge of the elephants which are making this way."

"No," I answered. "I will risk it and stay here. I want to see."

"I'll stay, too," said the boy, who would have been willing to be burned alive with me, should it have been my fate.

The circle was now very small. The loud crackling of the burning grass and the roar of the flames were deafening. Above the fire's frightful monotone, like a discordant band, coming from the distance, I heard the tramp of the trumping elephants.

FLINTLOCK AND ASSAGAI VS. TRUNK AND TUSK

IT WAS now early morning. The cold chill of the night had passed and the solar heat that crept through the choking smoke called my blood to life. The east grew gray, violet and red in quick succession. The sun rose out of the hills east of Lake Kivu and lit the world. What a sight met my eyes!—a sight printed indelibly on the film of my memory.

To the north of my watching-place, forming a rough circle of at least three-quarters of a mile in diameter, stood an irresolute mob of elephants, each family forming its own cluster, the fighters on the outer edge. The hundreds of backs shining like polished leather looked like the roofs of some weird city. Tusks gleamed and flared in the sun.

The mother-elephants, solicitous of the welfare of the young, kept as near as possible and even admired them for playing pranks on each other, as they did on every opportunity, for they did not realize the strange danger that threatened them. They seemed no less human than human beings.

Here, in the cruel, slowly moving circle of fire, all waiting for a leader to take them out of danger, the elephants stood, majestic and noble. They might have been the elephant-cavalry of Hannibal's mighty army.

The fire swept on. The smoke gathered thicker about them. The mothers commenced to trump in fear. The huge trunks moved restlessly to and fro over each other, writhing like wounded serpents over a lake of pitch.

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Below me, with a cruel leer on his tattooed face, and his sharpened teeth showing below his heavy lips, crept the black form of a native cannibal. He was holding a pair of heavy assagais in his powerful hands. Others soon joined him. I knew that the slaughter was about to commence.

These little, cruel, cunning natives, crawling like snakes in the grass, filled me with revulsion. I hated them and almost wished I were an elephant, so that I could fall on them and crush them.

The fire crept in. The elephants on the outer edge screeched in pain as it burnt them. A shot rang out; then a volley from the thundering flintlocks. Assagais and buzzing arrows filled the air and fell like rain from the sky. With frightful screeches of pain, the elephants, in chaotic consternation, rushed to the edge of the advancing fire and then in their fear retreated. One after another fell under the terrible onslaught, their huge bodies quivering as they bled to death from the frightful wounds of the assagais.

The cries of the natives were, if anything, worse than the screeches of the elephants. Here and there among the wounded and dead mammoths lay the prostrate form of a cannibal who had received an arrow that was meant for an elephant.

Everywhere I could see the cannibals rushing in among the infuriated elephants, stabbing right and left like fiends reveling in a carnival of death. One after another the natives were tusked and crushed to death by the charging elephants. The bloody spirit of war had seized them, and they rushed into destruction to kill or be killed with the lightness of heart of children playing tag.

"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS"

AS THE fire crept on, the smell of burning flesh added to the horrible reality. An old bull elephant, driven mad by fear and trumping in anguish, charged over the fire and came rushing down toward my tree. As of one accord the living elephants turned and followed him, tramping out the fire as they charged.

One after another bumped my tree. The platform swayed back and forth dangerously. I shot at some of the elephants, hoping that some of them would fall near my tree and protect it with their bodies, but none of them stopped. On they swept. The tree shook violently.

Suddenly the platform, shaken from its position, fell. I grabbed a limb overhead, as did my "boy," who had stood and watched the whole scene of danger. The limb cracked and bent down out of reach of any others, almost on the backs of the galloping elephants. Another minute and it was bound to snap.

"My God!" I cried.

My "boy," without a moment's hesitation, said, "I'll let go, boss."

The next instant the limb, relieved of his weight, sprang up, almost jerking me off.

When I climbed into a safe position I could see between the charging elephants the mangled form of the "boy." I never would have died for him, yet he did for me.

An hour afterward the last elephant had passed out. Sick at heart, I climbed down from my perch. That day, I estimated, thirty natives and close on one hundred elephants lost their lives.

THE ORGY

THEN came the feast. Tom-toms were beaten and thousands of natives collected from the nearby villages. The first meal was eaten where it lay, being hacked from the huge carcasses with every conceivable form of sharp weapon. Children wallowed in the sticky blood and fought with each other over choice tit-bits. Every bit of the dead elephants was cut off the bones and taken to the villages to be smoked and kept for future use. The ivory was then collected and divided with mathematical fairness among the chiefs of the villages that participated in the hunt.

That night the village musicians beat their tom-toms. Instruments of every conceivable sort were blown and beaten till they screeched in frightful discord. The revelry was wild; the howling savages danced till they fell from exhaustion.

From near by my hut rose the prayers of the witch-doctors, who were on their bellies before their wooden fetish, thanking their god for his mercy and his goodness. It is strange how both the civilized and the savage thank God for being allowed to kill something, even if it be their own kind.

Far off I heard the roars of the lions,

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which were on the hunting-grounds, devouring the corpses of the natives killed in the hunt. At any other time the corpses would have been eaten by their tribal enemies, but as there was plenty of elephant-meat they were left to the lions.

The din of the noise and the prayers and the songs made me tired. I turned over and went to sleep.

The following morning when I awoke the strange, unusual quietness of the village was broken only by the mumblings of the old witch-doctor, who was groveling before the wooden idol. In every direction, under the shade of the huts, lay the natives, who were so full of elephant meat that their bellies looked as tight as over-inflated balloons. So gorged were they that it was evident that it pained them to move.

Here and there the village dogs were showing their love for their masters by licking the stale juice of the elephant-meat from their faces. On every place that would support it was a bundle of elephant-meat out of reach of the dogs.

On the ground, covered with thousands of carnivorous insects of every imaginable hue, were heaps of rotting offal, from which rose sickening odors that increased in intensity as the day grew older and the sun warmer. Vultures, hook-beaked and hungry-looking, attracted by the smell of the meat, were perched on every point where they could find room.

Hyenas and jackals skulked on the outskirts of the village, waiting a chance to rush in like thieves and grab a mouthful of meat. It was a scene sickening and repulsive, but one that can be witnessed at almost any time in central Africa.

Two days after the elephant-hunt a report reached my ears that both leopards and lions were skulking around the village and that a leopard had rushed into the square early in the morning and carried off the chief's favorite dog. This was to be expected, for the fire which the natives had lit on the *veld* to round up the elephants had kept on burning and had driven the graminivorous animals, on which the lions, leopards and other carnivora fed, out of the district. Therefore the village, with its goats, dogs, fowls and human beings, was the nearest possible feeding-ground for these beasts.

A LUCKY SHOT

A FEW nights after the dog was taken, just as I had finished writing up my diary, a terrible commotion arose in the village. In the morning traces of blood were found in the grass to the north of the village. From that we picked up the *spoor* of the leopard, which we traced to some rocks in an old river-bed, where we found, mixed with gore and blood-stained gravel, the crunched horns and a part of the skull of the goat. After that, I decided it was my duty to sit up and get a shot at one of the marauding beasts.

Accordingly, I had the natives build me a leaf-shelter, near which I tethered a young goat to act as a lure to the leopards. For three nights I waited, hidden in the leaves.

On the fourth night, which was somewhat cloudy, I went to my shelter with that same fascinating hope of finally being able to get the quarry, which is part of the equipment of all those having the hunters' instinct. The poor little goat that was acting as bait had become tired of bleating and had gone to sleep.

I, too, was dozy, almost nodding, when I heard the gentle, unmistakable brush of hair against the leaves near my shelter. I was afraid to move lest I frighten the beast, which soon passed by and crouched to spring.

The moon for a second lit the scene. I saw the animal was a leopard. The goat, evidently smelling the leopard, rose and ran to the end of its tether.

The leopard sprang. I fired at the same instant. The huge body struck the earth with a heavy thud.

Natives, awakened by the explosion, came running from the huts. Torches were lit, by the aid of which we examined the dead leopard. We found that the bullet had passed clear through its brain. A lucky shot, for I aimed at its body.

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A RELAPSE INTO SIN

By George Vaux Bacon

THE Broadway Limited rushed through the mists of the Alleghanies toward Chicago. As it passed a rustic interlocking tower made of mountain boulders, the locomotive began sucking up water from a track-pan and the speed decreased.

Coincidently, Mr. Schwartz entered the dining-car. The immaculate person with the white waistcoat, large brass watch-chain and gilt buttons who presided over the traveling dining-room conducted him to a table where a gentleman with a broad back and a sinewy neck was negotiating a cup of coffee, keeping rhythmic swing to the oscillations of the train as he did so.

As Mr. Schwartz approached the table he was a figure entirely worth noting. A large diamond horseshoe-effect glittered in his saffron tie, barred with red; a sky-blue waistcoat encircled his thin diaphragm. Upon the waistcoat were crimson shamrocks. There was a serious air upon his horse-like face. Generally speaking he wore too much color; but his outward appearance, it must be said, rather belied him.

He looked like a prosperous book-agent; but was, as a matter of fact, a swindler with religious aspirations. His table-manners were incredible; but he had a good heart and kept a portrait of his mother, wreathed in immortelles, in a Chicago warehouse, upon which he regularly paid storage. Like most tall, thin men of religious tendencies he had a large and active Adam's apple and one of those lean, straggling noses. In short, by instinct he was an abbot; by circumstances a financier in the modern meaning of the word.

He seated himself at the table opposite the gentleman with the thick neck and after a modest interval, slowly raised his eyes. At the same moment, the other gentleman raised his from the cup out of which he was still ingurgitating coffee. The coffee-cup was set down, and a gentle, flickering smile of instantaneous and mutual recognition fluttered over the angular features of Mr. Schwartz as well as over the rubicund face of Mr. Flannigan, both late of a common residence at Reading Gaol, England, owing to an inconvenient lack of elasticity in His British Majesty's laws.

Neither spoke during the meal; but at its completion they strolled together through the train to the smoking compartment in their car.

They sat down, facing each other.

"Going to Chicago?" asked Mr. Schwartz.

"Yep. I figure it's the furtherest thing from England there is."

Mr. Flannigan reflectively blew a smoke ring toward the ventilators as he spoke.

"Anything particular on?" asked Mr. Schwartz tentatively and with an air intimating apology for a leading question.

MR. FLANNIGAN considered the matter for several moments in silence. The train was approaching Pittsburg and rapidly gathered speed. Mr. Schwartz, who was ticketed for the city of

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smoke and millions, restrained with difficulty his desire to prod Mr. Flannigan into greater eloquence.

"I am undecided between real estate and medicine," Mr. Flannigan opined finally. "Both have great latitude under the law."

A light not entirely holy appeared in the eyes of Mr. Schwartz. The abbot was completely submerged.

"Medicine is sloppy," he remarked.

"True," mused Mr. Flannigan and looked out of the window.

"Real estate—" Mr. Schwartz who had been vainly trying to think of a good idea for bettering his financial condition for some time, spoke with studiously concealed interest—"is a gentleman's business and is very legal."

"Very," confirmed Mr. Flannigan.

Mr. Schwartz reluctantly played his trump.

"I have five thousand dollars left that I wish I knew what to put into," he murmured softly.

A silence, electrical with thought, followed. Mr. Schwartz's gaze fixed itself on the reflection of his extraordinary nose in the mirror opposite him. Mr. Flannigan observed with intentness the small porcelain button labeled "Hot" on the edge of the nickel-plated wash-stand nearest him till out of the travail of his brain came words.

"The past is past; but the trouble with us was that we pulled rough stuff while the trend of the times is to science. I have decided not to make any breaks like that again. The idea is not to break the law, but to skate along on it till you come to a hole some one has already broken for you. There's lots of 'em. You can fish to your heart's content, then.

"A jimmy isn't in it with a fountain pen, and a political pull goes further than a chilled-steel drill any old day. I'm off the rough stuff. I crave the legit. The bold, bad deadeyes of the past got their swag in spite of the law; now—" Mr. Flannigan's voice was gentle but firm with the utterance of truth—"they get it *by* the law."

He sighed tempestuously.

"If my paw had only taught me to be a lawyer!" he murmured. "Gee!"

"Where did you line up that streak o' dope?" asked Mr. Schwartz interestedly.

"A State's attorney on the liner coming over tipped me off. He thought I was a banker at first, and was nasty as the dickens; but when I showed him my discharge from Reading, he bought me highballs till breakfast-time and invited me up to his house to dinner the next time I came to his town. He said that any business man who has served the term in jail that's coming to him, these days is a credit to the Republic. When he tried to kiss me, though, I gave the steward a dollar to take him to his stateroom and put him to bed."

"Real estate sounds pretty good to me," said Mr. Schwartz.

Mr. Flannigan's eloquence gained a new impetus at Mr. Schwartz's remark.

"It's a good proposition," he said, and especially the line I'm thinking of taking up, which is entirely legal."

He cleared his throat impressively.

"YOU buy, say, a hundred acres of land for, say, a hundred dollars an acre. You pay ten dollars an acre down and ten dollars a month till you're paid up. Then you divide it into lots that'll run about ten to the acre, which you sell for twenty dollars down and twenty dollars a month. You've made 1900 per cent. profit on your investment. You are paying ten dollars a month for each acre and you're taking in two hundred. Then, if you want to, you can put your profits into building houses on some of the lots and clean up a profit of three or four hundred per cent. apiece on them. It's simple and something that's got more money in it than all the crook games on earth. It pays to be honest and obey the law. Figure it out for yourself how much you make in a year selling the lots at, say, two hundred dollars apiece. You could turn that five thousand into a hundred thousand or so in no time."

Mr. Flannigan beamed wealthily upon Mr. Schwartz.

"Who are your market for all this stuff, though?" asked the latter cautiously.

"The flock of newlyweds."

"You've got to take the chance of people getting married all the time, then, to buy your lots."

"Sure; but that don't cut no ice. People are always getting married. Look at all the people there are in the world."

"But it's a chance market, ain't it? You ain't sure absolutely that people are going to be married quick enough all the time to keep on buying your lots. You just think they will because they have up to this time.

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That's a phoney argument." Mr. Schwartz spoke with emphasis.

Mr. Flannigan was silent for a minute.

"Of course," he said presently, "if I had a sure market, it would be better."

"I can give you one," said Mr. Schwartz.

"If you can, you're on for half and half and share alike."

Mr. Flannigan showed the Napoleonic swiftness of judgment in a business proposition that made Mayer Rothschild great.

"Pittsburg!" shouted the porter.

The two gentlemen engaged in conversation while the train waited under the shed at Pittsburg till Mr. Schwartz hurriedly got out at the last moment, rechecked his baggage to Chicago and bought a ticket. If any one had looked into the smoking compartment as the train pulled out, he would have seen a gentleman of serious mein and great thinness and a gentleman of rubicund and prosperous figure sedately dancing a jig therein with their arms around each other.

II

A FEW days ago a wise head spilt the remark that there are more suckers in a big city than in a small town because there are more people in the big city.

Speaking of cities, Chicago, like London, is a city of suburbs. As in London, the moment you get out of the business district you are in Hyde Park, Woodlawn, Englewood, Logan Park, Edgewater, Buena Park, Flossmore, Rogers Park, Kensington —in fact, anywhere but Chicago, which, however, is the Central Presence whose black aura of industry crowns them all as hers, dedicated in the whirr of factories and roar of traffic to her service. Beyond the Chicago Corporation proper, there is a string of little cities subsidiary to the Big City, beginning with Gary at the mouth of the Grand Calumet River in Indiana, and swinging in a great arc to Evanston and the line of beautiful towns that lie along the north shore leading to that malty port whence Chicago draws the amber for its steins.

In all of these young cities, real estate is a lively and much-practised business—generally in connection with its time-honored corollaries, insurance, renting and notary-publicking.

Mr. Flannigan opened an office at Ardenwood on the "Q," where there were large factories making automatic peanut-roasters and the only hill within a hundred-mile radius of Chicago. The factory and the hill occupied important positions on the large and brilliantly colored map which Mr. Flannigan and an inspired make-up man for a lithographing house designed together. In its way, the map, or "plat" as real estaters would call it, was a marvel of its kind. It combined color effects that screeched to the weary eye for strained attention with honeyed words that made the immortal "Why pay rent?" seem cold and callous.

In large letters of a tender green, luring to the city eye tired of grays and reds, "Flannigan's Holyrood Addition to Ardenwood" was described as a place where the wheels of industry and the peace of the home were linked in paradisiacal perfection. The prices of the lots were marked discreetly, "$200 and up." The "up" was the smallest word on the poster. Car-cards to match the posters were designed to meet the heart-hungry eyes of clerical swains returning in the evenings from their labors in the Loop.

When the posters were printed and ready for delivery, Mr. Flannigan turned his attention to the furnishing of his office in Ardenwood and of a city office which he rented in the Jefferson Building. For both, furniture of the most sumptuous description, including stenographers, was carefully chosen by Mr. Flannigan himself.

The stenographer in the Ardenwood office had the marvelous pale-gold hair and cream-like complexion which is the true type of the wonderfully beautiful women of Poland. Her name was Ianthe O'Halloran.

The one in the main office was a tall, refined-looking girl, quiet of voice and statuesque in the ideal American style. You can see her charming sisters any day south of Market Street in Philadelphia, which is the most American city in America and where dwell and have their being the only real snobs these United States have ever produced.

Her name was Weronika Galovic and she lived over her father's saloon at the corner of Halsted Street and Thirteenth. Mr. Flannigan specified that both girls should use ribbons of delicate lavender tint on their typewriters. Everything about both offices was tasty to a degree.

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When all was completed in the offices and the white-painted stakes were set in Holyrood Addition to Ardenwood, marking off the lots upon which soon were to rise the homes where love's young dreams were to awaken with the pressing of baby fingers and the kisses of baby lips, Mr. Flannigan was ready for the grand *dénouement*. Like a good general he had marshaled his forces and had everything completely ready before he started to do a bit of business.

WHEN the morning dawned on which he was at last ready to start active work, he appeared in the city office attired in the most approved garb of the conservative but energetic business man. His gray cutaway and trousers were perfect; his white duck vest was sublime. A small, modest diamond glinted respectably in his navy-blue tie. Mr. Flannigan was within the law in attire as well as aspirations. He hung his hat and yellow walking-coat on the office hat-tree, gave Weronika a perfunctory "Good-morning," and sank luxuriously into his cushioned desk-chair, his pink hands resting for a moment on the shiny mahogany desk before him.

But only for a moment. He picked up the receiver of his telephone and murmured into the receiver,

"Central 9696."

Five seconds passed before Central's nimble fingers snapped the proper plug into place at the telephone company's office and a man's voice answered "hello" in the transmitter held firmly against Mr. Flannigan's ear.

Let us speed with the psychological moment to an office in the Republic Building where sat Mr. Schwartz at *his* desk while words of import trickled into his ear from Mr. Flannigan's end of the line.

Mr. Schwartz's office was furnished with soft, romantic rugs, Romeos and Juliets in tender bronze, paintings of beautiful interiors tempting to the eye that has sickened of flats, and dainty studies in sepia of dear little children. Everything that could woo the heart of man or maid to the contemplation and desire for hearth and fireside was there. Mr. Schwartz, a study in clothes of soft, neutral tints, wore a pensive orchid buttonhole. A demure brunette stenographer wore plain gold ear-rings strangely remindful of wedding-rings. Cupids romped and capered on wall and ceiling. Psyche, the goddess of spiritual love and beauty, stood purely in white marble on a mahogany pedestal, clad in classic chastity and a diadem.

This was the office in which, according to the plan agreed on in Pittsburg, Mr. Schwartz was to conduct the matrimonial bureau to furnish newlyweds to purchase Mr. Flannigan's lots. The genius of the two gentlemen made nature its handmaid and put Cupid in the real-estate business.

What Mr. Flannigan said to Mr. Schwarz was simply that the time had come for the advertising to be put out and for both to get busy. When they ceased talking to each other, each called up their respective advertising firms, and the regeneration of Mr. Flannigan and Mr. Schwartz from gentlemen of the road into gentlemen of business was begun.

The next morning the wonders of Ardenwood and Mr. Flannigan's Holyrood Addition thereto flashed in full-page ads. in every newspaper in Chicago. The sweetness of wooded avenue and dewy lawn was extolled in letters of fire to the multitudes who tread the dusty streets or live in miniature apartments along boulevards reeking with Standard Oil and Crown gasoline. Of long walks through the snow to catch suburban trains nothing was said, naturally. Posters and car-cards galore also spoke the same tale of sylvan peace on every fence and in every street car in the city.

Also, in newspaper ads., posters and car-cards, Mr. Schwartz on the same morning stretched forth a helping hand to lead the lonely, for a small consideration, from boarding-houses and hotels into the haven of loving arms, a cottage in the country and whispered honey-goo.

Why be lonesome? "For every boy that's lonely there's a girl who's lonely too" quoted Mr. Schwartz's "literature" from the sugary, ungrammatical lyric of a popular "ballade" (shade of François Villon forgive that word!)

Thus blazoned at, Chicago recoiled, then thought, then ventured. Such is the spirit of Chicago, for it is the spirit of the great West, of which Chicago is the heart, to venture.

To Mr. Flannigan came those who see the logic of having what you pay for in the end; to Mr. Schwartz came stealthily, but no less surely, literary spinsters who, nobody would have dreamed, could yearn for such

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things of common clay and rapture as hugs and kisses; crusty bachelors who, one would have been amazed to discover, had secret cravings for something fluffy around the house and a half-baked mind to quarrel with at breakfast.

Unto these votaries of Eros and Hymen Mr. Schwartz catered with tact, turning them over with a great show of offhandedness to Mr. Flannigan as a gentleman whose taste was superb in the matter of knowing the proper place for cooing doves to cote.

III

IT IS a strange fact known to book-agents and monthly-instalment real estate salesmen that people usually pay for what they buy. The exceptions rank among those strange people in this world who, from logical smash-ups, rise serenely to new depredations on the accepted order of things.

To be original is to be ununderstandable as surely as to be misunderstood is to be great. The lunatic asylums, expensive apartment buildings and the Hall of Fame are filled with such people.

To be good is to be respectable; to be respectable is to be forever lost to the annals of the unusual, and only the unusual live in the memory of man.

Geniuses do not go to matrimonial bureaus nor buy real estate, however, and therefore from Mr. Schwartz's sanitarium for solitaire fiends and boarding-house crustaceans flowed a steady income as well as a procession of couples Flanniganward to whom a few dollars a month for new-found happiness with a house and lot thrown in was cheap and religiously paid. In fact, the newlyweds were handled so tenderly and with such interest by the legalized Messrs. Flannigan and Schwartz, that as houses were built and tenanted in Holyrood Addition, it was not uncommon to see marriage licenses and abstracts of titles framed side by side in many houses as documents of twin sacredness to the owners.

After a time, many a baby wore the royal name of Flannigan or the stout Swiss burgher name of Schwartz. Mr. Flannigan grew stouter and pinker and the light of true philanthropy glowed in the eyes of Mr. Schwartz as he handed out happiness on every hand for the nominal fee of five dollars. Also, their respective bank-accounts waxed until the cashier of the bank where they kept their money bowed to them clear across the bank floor when either of them entered.

Secondary effects that followed gradually were the elevation of Mr. Schwartz to the deaconship of a coldly respectable church where his ministerial and glumly pious face reminded a congregation entirely devoted to the sweets of this world on week-days as well as Sunday afternoons that the fires of Tophet are in all probability blue.

There followed, also, the installation upon the brief but capable nose of Mr. Flannigan of a pair of large tortoise-shell glasses with a silk ribbon appended and the appearance at his office one morning of a large, sumptuous limousine with his initials on the door and manned by a brace of knaves in buckram. One of the knaves was to open and shut the door for him as he entered or disembarked; the other was to drive the car; and both were to buy supplies for him from places where the chauffeur's commission is the largest.

Thus in state rode Flannigan.

And after a time Schwartz appeared fleetly upon the boulevards in a pea-green roadster.

As prosperous month after prosperous month rolled by and took its place with pleasant memories, he would have been a keen observer indeed who could have seen in the successful and scrupulously honest real estate dealer or the correct and prosperous church deacon any resemblance to the gentle scoundrels they had been of yore.

At the end of the eighteenth month, Mr. Flannigan took unto himself as the spouse of his bosom the beautiful Ianthe O'Halloran, while Weronika, the statuesque, fell to the lot of one of Mr. Schwartz's card-indexed bachelors with a gouty foot but much treasure of coin of the realm. Ianthe saw to it that a male stenographer took her place in Mr. Flannigan's city office, while a maiden-lady typist of hopelessly safe character succeeded Weronika at the Ardenwood office.

THEN came the unhappy awakening.

One Sunday, Mr. Schwartz had been invited to rise in the pulpit of his church and preach to the congregation. He did so, and inveighed against stealth in high places with a vehemence that glowed with sulfur,

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lakes of brimstone and hot pincers. In the evening, Mr. Flannigan had attended a church bazaar in the company of Ianthe, who was religious. Both gentlemen had awakened on Monday morning with consciences at peace and minds clear for the day's work. Neither saw the other all day long. After a long session with the bookkeeper, Mr. Flannigan repaired to the Majestic Bar (the most beautiful bar in all the world) for a wee nip.

He subsequently had a number of wee nips. He had even more. . . . The shades of night found him sitting alone in a cipolin-marble corner, gazing with undue earnestness at one of the row of drunken marble Pans that stand in a row of six behind the mahogany. He was full of " 'skee" and thoughts, and his thoughts were these:

"Schwartz keeps his cash overnight in his office safe so as to have more time and a clearer head to count it in the morning."

He became conscious of an impulse. The Pan leered at him infamously. He fought the impulse, but it drove him resistlessly. He looked away from the Pan, and with great dignity rose slowly to his feet and walked majestically out of the bar without staggering once. His limousine was waiting for him. He looked at the clock in it. It was just turning five. He directed the knave in buckram who opened the door for him to drive to Mr. Schwartz's office.

AFTER several ineffectual attempts to light a cigarette—at the end of which he noted with some surprise that he had neither a match nor a cigarette in his hands—he lay back on the seat and gazed thoughtfully out of the window. He was sleeping innocently when his yellow minion shook him and advised him that the car was at Mr. Schwartz's office. He emerged carefully from the car, directed the two knaves to wait for him and keep the engine running, and entered the building. The elevator man whirled him to Mr. Schwartz's floor where he alighted pompously and watched the elevator descend.

Mechanically, he produced a handkerchief from his hip-pocket and wound it around the lower part of his face. Then, tiptoeing dramatically, his expansive white waistcoat shining palely in the dim-lit corridor, he advanced upon the door of Mr. Schwartz's matrimonial bureau. When he reached it, he drew his key-ring from his pocket, and finding a skeleton key upon it, noiselessly turned the lock and opened the door.

Then he stopped abruptly, as if suddenly paralyzed.

Mr. Schwartz kept the safe in the outer part of the office. Kneeling before it, bull's-eye lantern on the floor, a figure in black mask and vizored cap was busy chewing into the steel doors with a long, glittering drill. Mr. Flannigan had opened the door and entered as silently as a cat can walk across a Persian rug; but he suddenly hiccoughed violently. The masked figure sprang to its feet like a panther, and whirling in midair to position, faced the intruder with revolver leveled.

"Hands up!"

Mr. Flannigan hastily flung up his fat hands. The action caused the handkerchief to drop from his face.

"Flannigan!"

The robber removed his mask.

"Schwartz!"

Mr. Flannigan fell heavily into the nearest chair, perspiring copiously.

Mr. Schwartz cast his vizored cap on the floor, turned on the lights and regarded Mr. Flannigan lugubriously. The latter seemed ready to melt entirely and run off his chair all over the carpet.

"It is with you even as with me," Mr. Schwartz intoned presently, "we have walked the primrose paths of dalliance vile with the sacred laws of right so long that we can now go no other way. I am driven to stealing from my own safe to keep from going out of my head with an overdose of respectability."

Mr. Schwartz dropped his drill on the floor, sat down and wept silently, his face in his hands. Mr. Flannigan's face was a round, ruddy moon of wo. Presently he spoke.

"Do you remember," he said, "how I have been complaining for weeks that thieves have been stealing my 'For Sale' signs from the Ardenwood office and that nobody has been able to catch them?"

"I do," said Mr. Schwartz pathetically.

"I stole them myself," said Mr. Flannigan pensively. "I have a coal yard full of them at Sixty-Third and Western Avenue."

Mr. Schwartz nodded unhappily.

"It first struck me when I began to pass the plate at church," he sighed. "Somehow or other, try as I could to put more

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money in than I took out, I always left the church with a dollar or two more in my pocket than I had when I went in."

Mr. Flannigan shook his head wearily.

"I stole Weronika's hat-pins and Ianthe's chewing gum until I felt morally obliged to raise Weronika's salary and marry Ianthe," he murmured.

They looked at each other in despair.

"We are both rich," ventured Mr. Flannigan presently.

"We are," acquiesced Mr. Schwartz ministerially, "and we have made a great many lonely and aching hearts loving and happy."

"That's true," assented Mr. Flannigan, a note of self-consolation in his voice.

Mr. Schwartz arose, walked two or three times up and down the office gritting his teeth, then halted suddenly before Mr. Flannigan and said in a cold, set voice:

"There is no other way. The only thing we can do to keep out of jail is to get into the coal and ice business!"

Mr. Flannigan gazed with wrinkled brow at something he had absently pulled from his coat pocket. It was one of Ianthe's earrings which he had thoughtlessly stolen that morning as he kissed her good-by. He muttered hopelessly:

"It seems an awful way to make money; but I guess it's all we're fitted for."

Arm in arm, the two unfortunate toys of Fate walked to the elevator and were whirled down to the sidewalk level. Mr. Flannigan rode homeward to Ianthe, struggling to make up his mind to give her back her ear-ring and thinking of the price of coal.

Mr. Schwartz fled homeward along the boulevard in his pea-green roadster, trying to remember a quotation from the Old Testament with which he wanted to end a sermon he was slated for in a couple of weeks, and pondering the probability of being able to raise the price of ice during hot waves in coming Summers.

THE TEMPERING of HARRY BLUNT

By TALBOT MUNDY

CHAPTER I

BLUNT OVERHEARS A CONVERSATION

THERE were few officers in the British army who were better looking than Captain Harry Blunt. He was clean-cut, lean and graceful, with the panther-strength that comes of decent living and outdoor exercise. As he waltzed with Kate Everleigh under the blazing lights of the garrison gymkana, there were plenty who found time to look at him. Some envied him his partner, and more than one woman present envied her.

"Unfair, I call it," said a subaltern, emerging from the refreshment-room, and eyeing the dancers gloomily. "That fellow Blunt snaffles up all the luck there is."

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Digby Radford—he who played back on the North of India polo team—refixed his monocle and stared about him.

"What's he done?" he demanded, without much apparent interest. "Thought he'd only got money."

"You're not blind, are you? Look! Case of inverted Hobson's choice, I call it. Wonder which he'd choose, if he had his own way; go to the front with the regiment, or stay behind and make love to the girl?"

"I know which I'd choose," said Radford. "So'll he. He'll get it going and coming. He'll go to the front, lucky devil, an' come back and claim the girl afterward."

"And rotten with money too, confound him! It's easy to understand why there isn't enough luck to go round. One or two men get it all."

The last few bars of the "Blue Danube" began to draw out dreamily. The crowd commenced to surge toward the doorway, to draw a few breaths of the dew-laden air outside; but Harry Blunt and Kate Everleigh danced on. She danced like a naiad, light as a wisp of thistledown, and with no effort that was apparent to her partner. It was Elysium to dance with her. He would not have missed one step of it for worlds.

The waltz ended, and the music gave place to the sound of chattering and laughter. She laughed up at him, took his arm, and followed in the rear of the procession that filed out slowly between the two privates of Blunt's Regiment, who stood ornamental guard, one on either side of the doorway, like twin images of the god of war.

"I SUPPOSE this is almost the last I'll see of you for a while?" she said as they reached the corridor.

He turned his head to answer her, and caught her eyes; and for a second he tried to fathom them. But there was the Eve-old art of guarding secrets with the organs that betray the sterner sex oftenest. Her voice was soft—plaintive, almost. There was a tone in it that hinted dissatisfaction at the prospect of his going, but her eyes denied it. In them were only laughter, and amusement, and the joy of life.

"I suppose so—though I don't know yet of course. The orders only came yesterday, and we're off next week. It won't be known until tomorrow who's got to stay behind."

"Won't you all go, then?"

"One man must stay—to look after details, and that kind of thing. There's not much competition for the job," he explained, laughing.

"I—suppose not."

Again he thought he detected something more than mere interest in her voice. Her fingers were resting ever so lightly on his arm; he pressed them to his side. There was no response, though. She appeared not to have noticed it.

"Strange, isn't it?" she said, "how one meets people here in India, and gets to know them almost intimately, and then loses sight of them for years and years—and then meets them again, when they've altered almost out of recognition!"

She seemed to be trying deliberately to madden him. Surely she knew that the mere touch of her fingers on his sleeve sent the blood surging through his veins!

"It seems to happen to us two pretty regularly," he answered.

"It's almost like reincarnation, isn't it? The last time I knew you, you were a little boy in knickerbockers, almost mad with excitement because they were sending you Home to school. Now you're a Captain in the Fiftieth. I wonder what you'll be the next time I meet you."

"I wonder if you care!"

Kate ignored that question. She sat down on a seat near the doorway leading to the terrace, and he had to follow suit.

"Have I changed?" she asked him.

As she spoke she turned and faced him. He could read nothing but laughter in her eyes—mockery perhaps; and the dimples that played around the corners of her mouth seemed to him to be born of mischief. Nevertheless they maddened him.

"You used to be Kate; now you're Miss Everleigh!"

"Well, sir?"

"Come out on to the terrace, and sit out the next one with me. I could talk to you for hours about——Kate!"

"I'm afraid I can't," she said. "I'm dancing the next."

"That's all right. Cut it and come on!"

"Couldn't possibly. It's Colonel Lemesurer. Look; there he is, coming to claim me."

"Confound him!" said Blunt politely. "A bachelor Colonel's the curse of a regiment. They ought to marry 'em off while they're still Majors."

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She arose and nodded to the Colonel, who was forcing his way slowly through the crush toward them.

"I wouldn't miss a dance with Colonel Lemesurer for worlds," she said. "Did you know he was my godfather? Well, he was; and he's my very oldest friend."

"I suppose I must give way to him, then. May I have the one after?"

"I'm engaged for that one too."

"I suppose you're engaged for all of them for that matter! So'm I. But I want to talk to you, little lady. Can't you cut one of them and sit it out with me?"

She looked down at her program and nodded. "Number nine," she said; "the third one from now. Shall we meet here?"

"Thanks!"

He put all the meaning that he could into one small word, bowed stiffly to his Colonel, and left her to him. Before he went on to the terrace, though, he took out his program and diligently rubbed out the next three names, "to establish a working alibi" as he explained to himself. Then he scribbled the initials K. E. in the vacant spaces, and strolled out.

ON THE terrace, where the swaying strings of Chinese lanterns hung like jewels set in the dead-black Indian night, a man could think. The strains of waltz music that floated through the open window were rather a help to thought than otherwise, and there was nothing else there to disturb him.

There were couples sitting out in the dark recesses, wherever two chairs had been placed side by side; but they were too busy with their own affairs even to notice him. And there were native servants, squatting here and there, singly and in little silent groups—brown-eyed images of patience, who peered at him from underneath white *pugrees*. But they were of the East, and interfered with nobody; they merely watched, and waited.

Blunt found himself a vacant chair between two magnolia clumps and lit a cigarette. He meant to think harder in the coming twenty minutes than he had ever thought before in all his life. Since he had been old enough to think he had never done anything without careful deliberation and he had no idea of making an exception now.

What was the game? he wondered. He loved Kate Everleigh with all his heart and soul—with every ounce of manhood that was in him. No amount of argument could upset that fact; she was the one woman he could ever love. For a minute or two he ceased thinking, and allowed his brain to reel in contemplation of a mental picture of her, until his cigarette burned his fingers, and he dropped it, and lit another one.

Did she guess the truth? he wondered. Surely she must! He could conceal his thoughts as well as most men, but, judging by how other men in love behaved, he must have made that much pretty obvious in spite of himself. Well, what then? Was she laughing at him? He had suspected as much once or twice. She might be drawing him on for her own amusement; he had watched very carefully during the last few days, and she had given him no sign that she really cared for him. Besides, why should she? He was nothing but a Captain in a marching regiment—with a decent income, and youth in his favor.

A man placed himself in a deucedly awkward position if he ran the risk of a refusal; it put him at the mercy of the woman, so to speak. If he were to propose, and she refused him she might laugh at him; and he hated to be laughed at—hated it more than anything else in the world. After all he owed himself something; a man had a right to be more or less sure of his ground before he committed himself.

What *was* the game, then? Hadn't he the right to find out first to a certain extent how she felt about it, before placing himself in the awkward position of a suitor? If she didn't care for him, he had much better hold his tongue, and keep his heartburn to himself.

And then, there was another thing to be considered. His Regiment was leaving for the front in a week's time, and there was sure to be some pretty stiff fighting ahead. He might get killed. What then? Was it the game to propose to a girl while that risk lay ahead of him? True, other men often did it, but that did not prove necessarily that they were right. Why not leave matters as they were until he came back again, with the risks of war behind him. *M-n*, yes! And find her already engaged to some one else!

It seemed to him that he was in the very deuce of an awkward position. He would be a fool to show his hand until he was more

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certain. Yet he had only a week in which to get more intimate—and that week would be fully taken up with the rush of preparation for departure. On the other hand, if he left it until he came back, he would probably be forestalled, for she was a queen among women, and other men had eyes and understanding besides himself. But if he did propose to her, and had the unbelievable good luck to be accepted—and then got killed! He would have placed her in a most unenviable position—at the mercy of other people's sympathy. There seemed no way out of it, unless he—why not? tact would do it!—why not have a sort of understanding that would commit neither of them? He would avoid the risk of being laughed at that way, if he were careful, and——

"HE'S a little self-conscious, that's all!" said a low, sweet voice beside him, just loud enough to break into the train of his thoughts. It came from the other side of the magnolia on his right. He recognized it on the instant.

"He is!" a gruff voice answered her. "But it doesn't happen to be all. You must understand, Kate, I'm not trying to crab him; I'm giving you my reasons for not doing as you ask. The real trouble is there doesn't seem to be any steel in him—at least, not of the kind I want."

Harry Blunt sat still and listened. He had no idea to whom she might be talking, and he saw no harm in listening to Kate Everleigh; he did not suppose that she would talk secrets out there in the open. Besides, he would not have minded her listening to anything that he said in the least.

"D'you mean that he's a coward?"

"Lord, no! Nothing of that sort. But it's wonderful what a hundred men will sense, Kate. They'll spot what one of them, taken by himself, or even ten of them, wouldn't realize in a life-time. They'll do it in half a day, too. He was all right as a "sub," but now that he's got his company he's a possible danger. He'll have to stay behind, since one man must."

"But what does he do that's wrong?"

"Nothing! It's what he doesn't do that makes me afraid of him. I want a man who knows how to make up his own mind on the spur of the moment, even if he does make a mistake now and then. The men do too, and they'll spot the indecision in him in a minute, when it comes to the real thing."

"I don't see how you can possibly tell all that," she said—a little angrily, Blunt thought. "He's never been on active service. How can you know?"

"That's exactly it, Kate. I don't know. And I'm sure of all the rest. That's why I'm leaving him behind."

Blunt recognized the man's voice now. It was his Colonel's. Rather peculiar of him, he thought, to discuss one of his officers in that way with a girl of twenty-one. He wondered, with nothing more than mild interest, which of the company officers they were discussing. There were four or five who had not seen active service.

"Does that mean—— Will he—will he stay here in the garrison, while you're away?" she asked.

There was something rather like chagrin in her voice, and Blunt pricked his ears. So there was another Captain of the Fiftieth who was in the running! And, judging by the tone of her voice, she did not altogether relish the idea of seeing quite so much of him. Perhaps—perhaps it would be safe after all to leave the proposal until his return.

"Yes," said the Colonel; "he'll have to stay here. You see," he continued, "I've practically nothing by which to judge him. He plays a decent game of polo, but only decent. There's nothing brilliant about it, and he nearly always hesitates in a tight place.

"It seems to me that he's mortally afraid of criticism. He's so everlastingly afraid he'll make a fool of himself, that he can't make up his mind to do anything worth mentioning. Why, hang it, if he'd only get into debt, or make a fool of himself over a woman, I'd know what to do with him. You can cure that kind of a man."

"How d'you mean?" she asked, in an even lower voice than ever. "Make a fool of himself over a woman?"

"Fall in love. That's only another name for it!"

"Oh!"

"All men are fools, though. I'm not at all sure I wouldn't make a fool of myself this minute if I were twenty years younger! Now, if he were to fall in love with you, for instance——"

"According to your doctrine he'd be a fool!"

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"He'd be in good company, if I know anything of men."

"But——"

"If he did, I'd know what to do with him."

There was almost a minute's pause before she spoke. During the interval Blunt's cigarette glowed spasmodically in answer to his mood. No man can hear the girl he loves discussed from that point of view without a tremor.

"Then, if he were in love—with me for instance—you'd let him go to the front?"

Blunt ground his heel into the earth, and stopped smoking altogether. What kind of a scheme was this? And was she going to agree to it? The Colonel seemed not to have heard her, for he made no answer, and Blunt waited breathlessly for what was coming.

"I was thinking," said the Colonel suddenly," thinking of your mother, Kate, and of myself. She was the making of me, although I've never admitted it to a living soul until to-night. I'm not sure that I've even admitted it to myself! I loved her, and I courted her with all my might, until your father, "Bagh" Everleigh, came along and made the running too strong for me. She married the better man then, and I didn't see her very often afterward. Drifted apart, you know. Got sent to a different station—usual thing in India."

THERE came another pause—a longer one this time. The Colonel's mind was evidently groping in the past, and Kate Everleigh chose not to interrupt him. Blunt dared not move. He realized that he was overhearing confidences, but he could not get up and go away without making some kind of noise, and giving away the fact that he had overheard too much already. All that he could do was to sit quiet, and forget it afterward.

"She was never in love with me, Kate—never in the least. But she did not let me realize it until "Bagh" Everleigh came along. And I was so everlastingly in love with her, and so anxious she should think well of me, that I'd won my D. S. O. in next to no time. I'll bet my Colonel was grateful to her! Anyhow, he ought to have been, if he wasn't."

Kate did not answer him, and he went on again after a minute.

"You're the very image of your mother, Kate. Same eyes, same hair, same voice—I could almost believe I was talking to her instead of you! I wonder whether you're like her in other ways—whether you can mold men's characters—whether you like doing it?"

There was no answer.

"Care to try your hand?"

"I—I'm afraid I lack experience."

"So did Mother Eve!"

Blunt gripped the side of his chair and leaned nearer. Whether or not he had more right to listen now, he could no more have refrained than he could have ceased to love Kate Everleigh. Was she going to let herself be used in that way? It was all that he could do to sit where he was, and keep himself from interfering to prevent her.

"I don't ask you to fall in love with him, remember, or to put yourself in any kind of a false position. Only let him think he's in the running. Give him something to work for, to look ahead to; and tell him plainly that you won't marry any but a successful man."

"If—if I try, will you—— You won't leave him here?"

"On my honor, no! I'll give him his chance. Will you do it?"

"I'll try."

"Good! That settles it. Young Sutherland can stay behind instead of him. Are you seeing him again to-night?"

"I've promised him the next dance. I'll have to go now; he'll be waiting for me."

"Come on then," said the Colonel, rising, and giving her his arm. "I've taken too much of your time already."

They started toward the ballroom. Blunt laid his head forward between his hands, dropped his jaw, and almost groaned aloud. The next dance was his! He was the man who had no steel in him! And Kate Everleigh had promised to make him hope that he might win her, in order to mold his character!

The ground seemed all at once to fall away from under him. The blood surged to his temples and his back tingled with the shame of it. Yet he must collect himself and think—think—think! And he had no time to think. She would be waiting for him now!

Something that he thought was pride told him to send in his papers and leave the service; and something else, that certainly was caution, warned him that a man who

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did that on the eve of active service would surely be accused of cowardice. They would tell him to his face then that he had no steel in him, instead of saying it behind his back!

And then, how about Kate Everleigh? Could he possibly let her down? Would that be a decent thing to do? Could he let the Colonel think that he did not care for her, and mortify her by failure at the very outset? Never! Even if he had not loved her, he could never have done that. And he loved her—loved her as he had never loved, and could never love again in all his life!

But could he control himself until the Regiment left? Could he smile, and joke with her, and sit out with her on the terrace, and keep his torture to himself? Could he? He would have to! It was his first real lesson in making up his mind.

He strode straight toward the ballroom and met Kate Everleigh where he had left her half an hour before. The smile with which he greeted her cost him agonies, but he deceived everyone who saw him, except perhaps Kate Everleigh.

"If those two aren't engaged, they ought to be," exclaimed a dowager acidly, watching them go arm in arm toward the terrace.

"I suppose we'll all have to chip in for a wedding-present soon," said a subaltern of the Fiftieth, too overjoyed at the prospect of the coming campaign to be gloomy at even that prospect. "Gad, who wouldn't be a money-lender!"

"He'll do yet," muttered Colonel Lemesurer. "She'll make a man of him. It was all he wanted. If there's steel in him, she'll find it. The campaign and the Regiment'll do the rest."

That night Captain Harry Blunt, of the Fiftieth Foot, drove his sixteen-two Waler mare homeward between the shafts of his tremendous dog-cart at a pace that was never contemplated by the men who built the road—or the dog-cart for that matter. He scowled and ground his teeth continuously; but there was nobody to see or criticize him, so he showed nerve and decision in his driving, and scared his native groom to the verge of quite unnecessary hysteria.

Kate Everleigh, on the other hand, was wheeled home leisurely in a *'rickshaw*. When she at last reached her friend's bungalow, she hurried to her room without a word to any one, and cried herself to sleep.

"Oh, mother of me . . . dear, dead mother mine!" she murmured. "Why won't he speak?"

CHAPTER II

THE GIRL BLUNT LEFT BEHIND HIM

DURING the week that followed, Blunt saw little of Kate Everleigh. The whole garrison was tossed up in the turmoil of one regiment's departure, and no officer of the Fiftieth needed to look far for an excuse if he happened to cut short the social round. He did not avoid her altogether, though; he was too much a man for that. He carefully chose the same short hours that the Colonel snatched from between the intervals of frantically signing papers; and he was very careful to let the Colonel see him on those occasions. For love is a strange sickness, and breeds unselfishness.

His one idea until the Regiment left was to save her face before the Colonel; nothing could keep him now from going with the regiment, but one slip on his part might lose her the Colonel's good opinion and her own self-esteem. So he buried his heartache beneath a smile, and pretended he was bold enough to hope.

He suffered, though. The thought that she must in her heart despise him was gall and wormwood. Her little pleasantries, that had thrilled him while he was still in ignorance, now seemed like sweetmeats offered to a child for its encouragement. They made him feel small, and mean, and unworthy even of his own love for her; and to get away from that thought, he buried himself in work.

There was plenty of that, and there were all too few to do it; so his brother officers blessed him with unwonted fervor for taking more than his share of the load from their shoulders, and giving them time to prosecute less fruitless love-affairs. For the first time in his regimental career he began to gain the unqualified approval of his seniors.

"That fellow Blunt's a godsend," said the senior Major.

"I'm beginning to have hopes of him," said Colonel Lemesurer. "Wait for the real thing, though. That's when you find out what's really in a man. A railway clerk could do what he's doing now."

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And Blunt, who never even guessed what men were saying of him, worked all day long and far into the night at dry-as-dust detail, to help himself forget what haunted him.

What made things infinitely worse for him was the fact that he was popular with nearly all his brother officers. They made a confidant of him, as men often will of one who they think is different from themselves. To a man they were fighting men—clean-bred, up-standing gentlemen, but as keen on war and its unholy chances as a tribe of cave-dwellers; and without knowing exactly why they had set Blunt down as a man of peace, more fitted to be a civilian than a soldier. So he was forced to listen to every love-tale in the mess; and that meant one apiece from every subaltern, almost.

Tony Cranhurst, the senior lieutenant of his company, was head over heels in love, and garrulous about it. The night before the Regiment went away, he came into Blunt's sleeping quarters long after midnight to ease his bursting exultation. At first, Blunt welcomed him, for the long, still watches of the burning hot Indian night were the times when he had to face his love alone, and yearn for Kate Everleigh in dreadful solitude. But after the first few generalities there came the deluge —the long, impassioned outpouring of a Tony Cranhurst love-affair.

"Harry, old man!" he said, pacing up and down along the wall where Blunt's boots had stood, and where his sword still hung—and where the space was among the pictures where he had meant one day to hang Kate Everleigh's photograph. "Tell me! Isn't it fine? Think of it; engaged on the eve of war! There never was such luck since the beginning of the world. Why, man alive, if the luck holds I'll come back made. Can't spend money, either, while the campaign lasts. The pay'll pile up at the bank—war-pay at that."

"Don't you ever sleep?" asked Blunt wearily.

"Lot's o' time to sleep on the train tomorrow. Jee-rusalem! Harry, you old stick-in-the-mud, don't you envy me? Don't you wish you had a girl?"

"No, confound you! Get out of here, and let me sleep."

"All right, old man. Only, I say! If you get killed, remember, I'm next in line after you. I'll get the Company. You'll remember that, won't you, when you get spiflicated? When you get it cold under your fifth rib, you'll know that you're pleasing two people instead of one."

"Get out of here, you indecent young pagan, and let me sleep. Good heavens, look at the time! Go away, and dream about her.

"All right, I'll go now. I will really. Only, don't forget that, will you? Remember you're dying in a good cause. It'll make you feel better about it. Night-night, Harry. Sweet dreams."

Tony Cranhurst was Blunt's most intimate friend in the regiment—the one who was most completely at his ease with him. He was the one man, too, who would be inconsolable if Blunt were killed, and Blunt knew it. He knew that Tony had a heart of gold, that from him he would get ready sympathy and inviolable secrecy; for Tony, the talkative, never divulged a confidence. But even a friendship such as that is as nothing when weighed against the ingrown habit of a lifetime.

WHEN a man is well bred in the first place, and in addition has a considerable fortune that enables him to mix always with his social equals, he gets a start in life that should take a lot of overhauling by men less fortunately placed. When he has the spur of family tradition as well, to make him ambitious, there ought to be no catching him; he should lead men all his life.

Harry Blunt had those advantages. He had been born in India, and his early, impressionable years were spent where white men of decent family are credited with being God's greatest handiwork, and behave accordingly. Later on, he had been sent Home to an English public school, and there, in accordance with a similar tradition —calling for different methods, but having precisely the same end in view—he was kicked and caned by men who were less well born than he was. That did him good, of course.

But he learned too fast. By the time that he reached Sandhurst, he was already able to behave himself in public like an English gentleman, and that, it will be conceded, is a rather different thing from being one. Instead of being a new boy in a new school again, and having the rest of his education rubbed into him by means of

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prefeudal horse-play, he found himself an apparently finished product, accepted as such by older men, who ought to have known better.

He had discovered that by unceasing watchfulness he could guard against the mistakes that bring down ridicule on the head of the man who makes them. And he hated ridicule. It was almost the only thing he feared. That was a survival from his boyhood days in India, where laughter at a man is a hideous insult.

So he drew on his education like a protective skin, instead of having sense rubbed into him, and pluck and character dragged to the surface by the roots, as happens to more fortunate young men. By the time that he received his commission in the old Half-Hundred, he presented a fine exterior, polished, suave, dignified, and apparently at ease. But underneath it lay an undeveloped character, weakened by an ever-present dread of being laughed at.

Love, fed by the sense of chivalry that was in his marrow, tortured him and half distracted him; and pride, whether true or false, or blended true with false, was the other end of the rack that had him in its grip. He had strength enough to love Kate Everleigh without one atom of reserve, and quite unselfishly; and yet he lacked the strength to break away from what he understood was hopeless. Shame urged him to hide himself, and keep away from her; and chivalry kept him pretending on that he hoped, for fear that she might be put to shame before the Colonel.

Blunt felt lonelier than he had ever thought a man could be. He might have received a world of wise counsel from his friend Tony Cranhurst, whose maxim in all things was "ram in your spurs and ride!" But that carking, close-hugged caution he had taught himself warned him that even his friend Tony might laugh at him behind his back. So he held his tongue, and groaned through the long night hours—and worked all day long like a gun-team in his efforts to forget.

Thus, when the day came at last that was to see the Regiment entrained for the long haul northward, Blunt was the only man in the Fighting Fiftieth who was not half beside himself with glee. He arose from a sleepless bed, too full of sorrow for himself and yearning for Kate Everleigh even to eat his breakfast. The grim, khaki-clad parade at dawn; the last roll-call in cantonments, when many a decent soldier-man answered to his name for the last time on any barrack square; the farewell to the colors, that were carried off to rest in safety until the Regiment should bring back fresh honors to inscribe on them—all the time-honored military details that are observed for the sake of what they mean to the men who must live up to them, left him with scarcely a thrill. He was too dumb with misery to do more than notice them and take his part like a machine.

THEN the drums crashed and the fifes shrilled out the tune that has exulted amid the havoc of a hundred battlefields. The sound of the regimental quickstep and the well timed scrunching of the serried companies awoke the depot. Man, woman and child turned out to wish them Godspeed and the Fiftieth's usual amazing luck.

There were more wet eyes than dry ones along the roadside, for it was no uninspiring sight to see the old Half-Hundred marching out between two lines of waving hats and fluttering handkerchiefs, to peg down yet one more border of an Empire. They had always marched out that way, ever since there had been a Fiftieth; and it was their habit to come back again along the same road—thinned, but glorious. So a thundering, rousing send-off was theirs by right, and an envious garrison gave it to them.

But Blunt seemed unaffected. He led on his Company with his lips drawn firm and straight, and his jaw set square. The enthusiasm that electrified the ranks appeared to get no hold on him. His heart ached too terribly to let him even force a smile. He was dreading what he knew lay still ahead of him—Kate Everleigh, waiting on the station platform to bid farewell to the Regiment. He set his teeth, and saved his strength to meet the thing he dreaded.

Then, as the leading company drew near the station, and the band drew out to one side and halted to let the Regiment pass, the tune changed. Some of the cheering changed to sobbing, and some of the fluttering handkerchiefs stopped fluttering. Clear, quick and lively, jolly as the song of boat-boys, and utterly regardless of the hearts it tore, there arose the soldiers' *au revoir* that has echoed through barrack yards and

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on the road to battlefields so often—and often enough in vain:

> Oh, and bring me back again safe and sound
> To the girl I left behind me!

Blunt cursed the tune, and cursed the man who wrote it, and the band that played it, as he wheeled his company beneath the hot iron roof. As the final bars of the war-old hope reëchoed through the station buildings he saw Kate Everleigh—white, and winsome, and fairer than even he had ever thought her. There were fifty other women on the station, but his eyes sought and found her at the first glance, and he did not even recognize the others.

And because there was courage in the man, that only needed bringing to the surface; and because not all of his pride was false, he pulled himself together, and smiled, and nodded as he passed her; and his voice rang loud and clear as he halted his men and fronted them toward the train. For all that the band kept on repeating that infernal tune, and half the women's eyes were wet, and his heart had shrunk within him until he felt weak and unsteady on his feet, nevertheless, he met her with a straight eye and a smile when she came up to say good-by to him.

He saw his Colonel watching him, and he thought of her pride; his own meant nothing to him in that minute. He thought her eyes seemed strangely soft and pleading for a woman who thought lightly of a grown man's love, and cared only to mold his character. He had to force himself to remember, and recall the very words she used in binding her agreement with the Colonel. His head swam, and his ears sang with a sensation that was new to him. But he held his ground, smiled, and spoke to her.

"Good-by, Miss Everleigh!"

She tried to answer him, but the words seemed to stick somewhere in her throat. Suddenly, without warning so far as he could see, and to his vast amazement, she burst into tears. He stood looking at her, feeling like a fool, and torn between sympathy, and discomfort, and wonder.

"I'm so sorry!" she said, trying hard to laugh at herself, and making such a pitiful failure of it that Blunt all but choked with love and pity for her. "It's that tune. It's—it——they don't *all* come back again, do they? Good-by, Captain Blunt!"

She held out her hand. He raised it to his lips, and kissed it—yearning to draw her to him and throw his arms around her. But what was the use of yearning? She was out of his reach—too good for him!

He stood up erect and drew his heels together. Without another word she turned and hurried from the platform. The last glimpse he got of her was the flutter of her white riding-habit in the distance, as she galloped her Arab pony straight up the road toward the depot.

Long after the train had left, though, he could not help seeing, whichever way he looked, two dark-brown eyes, tear-dewed and reproachful, that gazed at him from underneath a snow-white *topee*. He felt as if his heart-strings had been anchored somewhere back behind him in the depot, and as if the train were tugging at them until they must eventually break. His brother officers, cooped up in the stuffy carriage with him, talked to each other of garrison flirtations, and of the havoc that was likely to be wrought during their absence among the ranks of the eligible girls until the soul of Harry Blunt revolted at it.

"Blame it!" he growled. "Talk fight, or horse, or anything but women. I'm sick of hearing of your love-affairs."

He was the senior officer present, and he had a right to restrict the conversation if he chose to; so they obeyed him. He lay back on the corner cushions and closed his eyes and thought of Kate, Kate, Kate, and nothing else but Kate, throughout the whole of the long, weary journey to Peshawur.

CHAPTER III

THE HALF-HUNDRED LIVES UP TO ITS TRADITIONS

IT WAS a cheap campaign, and for a wonder it succeeded perfectly. A few thousand troops were assigned to a new-made General, with the private intimation that unless their numbers proved sufficient he would be superseded. So he worked; and the troops worked, blasphemously, but with every ounce of energy and strength they had in them. During three whole months of terrific marching the Colonels of regiments, and their junior officers, and every single man of the suffering brigades prayed fervently that the General Commanding might die a swift and most unnatural death. But the campaign

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progressed. The Afghans were harried from their fastnesses, rounded up into a herd, and brought to bay.

And during those three strenuous months Colonel Lemesurer was better than his word to Kate Everleigh. He sought for the steel in Blunt, and found it, and put an edge on it, and then used it until it would never fit tightly in its sheath again. Blunt left his outer skin of affectation three hundred miles behind him, sloughed off against the grit of the Himalayas.

There are one hundred and one ways of trying a man, campaigning among the "Hills," and Blunt ran through the gamut of them. In the early stages he saw other Captains chosen for posts of danger, where hesitation or the wrong command given in a hurry might have spelt disaster. To him fell the drudgery of camp, and all the petty detail work; which is bad enough in barracks, but eats out a man's heart on active service.

The injustice of it riled him, and he went about his duties with a sullen savagery that he had never shown a symptom of before. But work of any kind was a godsend to him, for he was still heart-sick for Kate Everleigh. The great, cold, stony mountains that go piling up, shoulder on shoulder, and lean against the sky, filled him with desolation. The wind, that blows everlastingly down every hillside, and either cows a man or else inspirits him, moaned to him of nothing in the world but loneliness.

So he went fiercely at his work. The camps of the Fiftieth—pitched and struck and pitched again in monotonous succession—were models for the whole brigade. Then—when the Regiment was dealing with a night attack and the men were spread out in a semicircle on the hills around, and Blunt as usual was in command of the camp-guard—a hundred oiled followers of the Prophet sneaked round to the rear and rushed him under cover of the darkness.

There was no one there to give him orders, and nobody to criticize him. Nor was there time or opportunity to pose. It was a case for quick decision, for sharp, barked commands delivered promptly, in a voice that carried reassurance; and Blunt made good. There were twenty-three hairy hillmen gone to their last account when the Regiment closed in to his assistance, and there was not even a tent-rope or a box of ammunition missing.

Colonel Lemesurer smiled, and Blunt hated him for smiling. The Colonel had seen men made while Blunt was cutting his eye-teeth at school, and he smiled from a sense of satisfaction; he was thinking of nothing but the Regiment, and the thought that he now had one more Captain he could count on was the thing that pleased him. He put a subaltern on camp-guard after that, and sent Blunt out to lead his Company and work the last ounce out of grumbling privates. He made him do advance-guard or rear-guard duty, or sent him with his company to act as a flanking party—whichever happened to be the hardest work. And every time that Blunt behaved with credit, the Colonel smiled to himself, until Blunt hated him with a hate that burned almost as fiercely as his love.

"Can't the old brute give me credit for anything?" he grumbled to himself. "If I do anything half decent, he thinks it's due to nothing but his cleverness in getting Kate to encourage me. Ugh! I hate men who scheme with women."

But the Colonel had forgotten Kate Everleigh—or at least had forgotten his bargain with her. All thought of that had passed out of his mind when the work of the campaign began. Now he knew nothing but his Regiment; and he knew that man by man, as a huntsman knows his hounds.

He set Blunt to the hardest kind of work because he found that Blunt could do it; and Blunt toiled like a mountain-battery mule because only in that way could he forget Kate Everleigh. And Blunt's Company toiled with him, and began to understand that their Captain was a man who got the real, tough soldiering to do. Men are like hounds in that particular; they will yelp in the wake of a man who shows them sport, and back him, hungry and sleepless, over or through or under any difficulty—and then yelp again for more; and they will desert in a pinch the man who only keeps them fat and comfortable. So F Company of the Fiftieth became the most efficient in Lemesurer's command; lean as wolves from doing twice their share of duty, but bright-eyed, fit, and handy.

AT LAST the two brigades, operating from different quarters of the compass, converged and brought the Afghan tribe to bay. Six thousand hook-nosed riflemen elected to make their

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stand on a jagged hill-top that was unapproachable from every side but one. It was higher and uglier than any other of the everlasting hills around them, and they had fenced it at the top with a long, irregular stone wall. It was a magnificent position for defense, but there was no retreat from it; they had to win, or die, or else surrender there. And surrender is not included in the doctrines of the Afghan.

It was likely to be a pyrotechnic finish, for they had marked the ranges out, and tried them with their long *jezails*. Their *mullah* had promised paradise to every man of them who died fighting on that hill-top, and the Moslem heaven is a better and more seductive place than the Himalayas at any season of the year. Fully half the Afghan forces had sworn to take the short route to the promised land. So, while the leg-weary brigades lay down and rested for a whole day below the hill, after their last twenty-four hours of hungry, forced marching, the tribesmen squinted down the barrels of their pre-Adamite but perfectly effective weapons and hurled unthinkable invective at them in a language that was expressly designed for picking quarrels.

Now that the night had come, and the regiments were lying in the open beside their arms in readiness to attack at dawn, the Afghans were keeping them thoroughly awake and on the jump by means of long-range sniping. But if the defenders' intention was to get on the soldier's nerves, they were failing signally. There was going to be a battle of the prehistoric, stand-up thunder-and-lightning, help-yourself-and-come-again description such as Tommy Atkins loves; and the men were talking in low tones among themselves and gloating over the prospect. A murmur rose from the recumbent army like the night hum of a city.

Harry Blunt, overcoated from ears to heels, stood out alone in the waist-deep midnight mist that made the pickets seem like shoal-buoys shaped after the head and shoulders of men. A cold, anemic-looking moon peeped out ever and anon between the cloud-banks and for a second or two showed the sharp, jagged outline of the hill-top that the Afghans held; but for the most part a man could see ten or fifteen feet in front of him, and beyond that was a wall of darkness. He was charged now with the safety of an army, for he had been assigned to look after the outer pickets; and no ordinary man is chosen for that duty when the mists lie low between the ridges and Afghan *tulwars* are about.

No man could undertake that duty without appreciating the honor that was done him and feeling proud. But it was lonely out there beyond his fellows in that wilderness of mist; and though his eyes and ears were keenly on the alert his thoughts were introspective, as a grown man's must be when the morrow, or even the next instant, may bring death. He knew that he had done well, else he would never have been where he was that night, in the forefront of the army. Even the General Commanding had noticed him on one occasion. But the thought brought him singularly little satisfaction. He felt like the loneliest man on earth.

If he had had Kate to work for; to succeed for; if she had loved him, instead of half despising him (he supposed that she did that), and consenting only at Lemesurer's behest to—to—how should he express it?—treat him like a puppy at the end of a string—how glad he could have been at his success! How he loved that girl! He wondered why a man should be allowed to love like that, and meet with no response.

He wondered whether she guessed how much good love was running to waste, or what it felt like to be so lonely, and hopeless, and ambitionless, and empty. Gad, how her eyes still haunted him! He could see them in the mist, in between the cloud-rifts when the moon peeped out, down in the dark hollows between the crags around him. Even when he closed his eyes for a second, they still haunted him.

"Oh, the deuce!" he muttered. "Mayn't a man forget?"

They were two Highlanders that formed the nearest picket to him—grim, gaunt, kilted warriors, leaning on their rifles and conversing in low tones. Blunt drew nearer to them, for he needed company, and what they were talking of might help to distract his thoughts. They started as he approached them, and their rifles clicked; then they recognized him and dropped their butts, and their voices rose again.

"AYE!" said the nearer of the two. "She's a bonnie lassie! Fifty several times she kissed me; an' then the lassie bade me promise her a dead Afghan for every ane."

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"An' did ye promise her? Mon, Jock, ye're an awfu' rash loon!"

"Promise her? Nay. I told her 'twas a verra weekid ambeetion. But I said I'd do ma best."

"Not so much talking there," growled Blunt. "Keep your eyes and ears well skinned, unless you want an Afghan *tulwar* apiece where you put your porridge!"

"Confound them!" he muttered, as he strode away. "Is there nothing else in the world to talk about but love and women?"

He decided to make his round; that would keep his mind off introspection for a while at all events. He drew back fifty yards or so inside the pickets, and made a bee-line for the furthest of them, the end where the London regiments were—Cockneys to a man.

"They'll be talking of dogs and beer!" he muttered.

Once again he was challenged—silently, for those were orders; a loud voice in the night will give the range to an Afghan marksman. Once again butts dropped to the ground as he was recognized, and the men of the picket continued their conversation where they had left off.

"Yes; a little pub for me, when my time's up. Hi've got my heye on one too—dinky little pub, wi' a music an' dance license, close to 'Arrer."

"Thought so!" muttered Blunt. "Now for the dog. This is better."

"Got the girl, too. She's a daisy, she is—two 'undred pound of 'er own in the savin's bank, an' been waitin' to marry me four year. I'd 'a' married 'er on the bleedin' strength, but for comin' to this 'ere blasted country."

"Stop that talking," ordered Blunt. "Can't you men realize that you're supposed to be the eyes and ears of the army? What d'you suppose 'll happen if the enemy rush in and catch you while you're busy gassing about your infernal sweethearts?"

"Love and women! Love and women!" he swore, as he started back along the line. "Am I the only man in all the army who hasn't got a sweetheart or a wife?"

He hurried on his round after that, cautioning the men, and wasting no time in listening to what they talked about. He did not dare listen. He knew what they were saying, and he cursed them for garrulous old women, and left them to pass on to the next. Then at last, at the end of the line, in front of where the Irish regiments lay, he waited, and tried to fix his thoughts on the coming battle.

He peered through the mist, trying to make out the only point where an attack was feasible. Once again the haunting, dark-brown, pleading eyes came between him and what he looked at, and he raised his hand instinctively, as if to brush them away. Then, clear as a bugle-call, a tenor voice rose above the hum behind him—a soft Irish tenor, that pleaded to the darkness—and the distant hum of conversation ceased. A whole brigade lay still and listened, while an Irish private wailed his sentimental ballad to the night:

> "And my love for thee, O Mavourneen,
> Is a bitter pain, O Mavourneen!"

"Oh, curse, curse, curse!" swore Blunt. "Are they all in league together to drive me mad, I wonder?"

Line after line the words rang sweet and clear through the stillness. The brigade took up the chorus, and roared it, until Blunt's soul shrank with agony, and the Afghans thought that a night attack was coming. He had relief then for a little while, for the hook-nosed tribesman on the hill opposite proceeded to waste their ammunition for a space. The singing ceased while the soldiers lay prone on their stomachs and watched the rifle-flames spurting along the ridge and roared derision.

But that one song had started the army singing; and because Tommy Atkins is a decent fellow in the main, and loves his girl as well as any other man, they sang nothing else but love-songs. They ran through the whole gamut of them, regiment after regiment putting up its finest singers to wring the others' heart-strings.

Long before morning Blunt was beside himself. He cursed himself for a fool, to think that such claptrap sentiment could affect him to the verge of tears. But the night before a battle is the time when what lies in a man comes uppermost, and in his heart of hearts Blunt was as sentimental as the rawest Irish peasant-private of the Line. He stood out among his pickets with the blood half curdled in his veins, and the early-morning cold seeping into him and putting the climax to his misery.

It was just before morning when a Highland regiment awoke the hills with "Annie Laurie." There is nothing particularly sad

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about that song, until Scotsmen sing it in a Himalayan mist. Then the pathos that underlies all Gaelic sentiment has full play, and the hills reëcho it and multiply it until it sounds like the funeral-dirge of Love. It brought tears from the eyes of Harry Blunt—the Captain of F Company of the Fighting Fiftieth, who had prided himself for years that no man living could pry behind his mask!

> And oh, for Annie Laurie
> I could lay me doon an' dee!

The words sank into the very soul of him, and brought him an idea. Death would be an easy matter shortly after day broke. Why not? He could think of nothing much to live for—except Kate Everleigh! And Kate Everleigh was destined for some lucky man worth loving, which he apparently was not. And that was another idea, not so definite, but—— He felt the cold less all at once, and his fingers closed tightly on his sword-hilt.

IT WAS a veil that lifted, as the mountain-mists lift with the rising sun—slowly at first, then suddenly, to leave the world bright and lovely. What had he done that he should be despised, and what had he left undone that a better man might do? The men of his Company believed in him, he knew that. They bragged of him to the men of other companies and other regiments, for he had heard them in the night watches, when he prowled among the tents on the alert. His brother officers had always liked him, as frankly and unreservedly as he had liked them. And Lemesurer had learned to trust him, which was a thing that that particular Colonel was not over-prone to do without due reason.

What had he left undone? He had not asked her! Why, in Heaven's name? he wondered. He thought backward to the hour when he had sat there in the darkness between the magnolias on the terrace—and still he wondered why. He could no more realize his point of view of a month ago than he could forget Kate Everleigh.

Suddenly the blood leaped through his arteries as it had leaped on that memorable night when he held the camp against a night attack; and his eyes, that were tired from his long night's vigil, snapped and were bright again.

"I see it now!" he said, slowly, and aloud. The nearest picket stared at him, and wondered whether he was talking in his sleep.

When day broke and he joined his company, and the old Half-Hundred waited out of rifle-shot, for the one man's sword that was to send them roaring up the hill—less honored regiments racing into the jaws of close-range, marked-out, calculated death—his color-sergeant came to him and saluted.

"I've put the ten best men behind you, sir," he said. "They'll do their best."

"Then put 'em back on the wings again," said Blunt. "I don't need nursing."

"Very good, sir," said the color-sergeant, trying not to look surprised; and there was a little shifting of the ranks while Blunt's order was obeyed. A galloper came thundering from the rear. One bugle call rang out, asking that the Fighting Fiftieth would make their title good. Colonel Lemesurer looked once along the double ranks lined out behind him, whipped out his sword, and:

"The Fiftieth will follow me," he said. "In quarter column. By companies on number one. Forward!"

The rest is history. They stepped forward, as guards of honor move, like one man, and with dignity. Then, as they reached the zone of fire, out ripped a bugle-call again, and they broke into the double at the sound, rippling as a lance-shaft ripples when it is gripped in rest. A third time the bugle called to them. A hoarse command went up.

They swept into the death-zone as a flood sweeps. They reached the hill-foot and surged against it. There was no check there that the eye could follow. They leaped up it, company by company, leaving a trail in their wake of writhing, blood-stained khaki, but roaring, struggling, leaping, racing upward, with the rear ranks filling up the gaps in front, and the hindmost companies struggling to catch the ones in front.

Then Colonel Lemesurer went down, shot through both thighs, and helpless.

"LEAD 'em on, Harrison! Lead 'em on!" he shouted to the senior Major, lifting himself into a sitting posture, and pointing upward with his sword.

Not a shot had been fired yet by the

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Fiftieth; they were aiming for the summit, to have it out there with the Afghans with the bayonet-point. One-third of their number were writhing or lying still along the path that they had taken. The rest were losing their alignment, losing speed, and wilting like a wheat-field under a Summer hailstorm.

"Halt! Volley-firing!" roared Major Harrison, anxious to give the men a breathing space and check the death-hail if he could.

"Lead on!" roared Lemesurer. But his voice was growing weak, and was drowned by the roar of the men who rushed on past him.

Blunt heard him, though. His Company was fourth in the advance, and had lost barely a dozen men as yet.

"Forward, F Company!" he shouted, springing out ahead of them, and leading them upward through the gaps between the leading companies that had halted to fire volleys.

"Halt! Volley-firing!" shouted Major Harrison.

"Orders, sir! Orders!" answered Blunt. "Form up, F Company! Now men, forward!"

In that instant Major Harrison fell dead, and Blunt found himself in front and above the Regiment. There were seniors to him probably, well within hearing of him, and to whom the command had evolved by right. But he had his Colonel's orders, and it was a brand-new Harry Blunt that had set out to obey them.

"Forward! F Company!" he yelled. "Now's your chance, men! Lead 'em! Lead 'em!"

Without stopping to see who followed him, he started up the hill again, springing from rock to rock, exposing himself where every man of the Regiment could see him—and follow him or not as they saw fit. His Company gave tongue behind him like a pack of hounds, and swept up the hill behind him.

Behind them a roar went up beside which the thunder of the first onslaught had been nothing. The Fiftieth had taken fire. Nothing now but absolute destruction could stop them. Wounded men crawled and dragged themselves upward; other wounded men lay prone, and potted at the Afghan riflemen; and then there was a final, wild, wonder-compelling rush, straight up into a hail of close-aimed lead, and the Fiftieth were at hand-grips with the Afghans. Four other regiments, mad-angry at being shown the way, snarled up the hill behind them and over the stone wall, and finished things.

The stretcher men, who dodge in and out of the firing line, had picked up Colonel Lemesurer before the bayonet-work was at an end. He made them bear him up the hill instead of down it, and it was he, propped up against the stone wall and held there by a sergeant, who re-formed the Regiment, and told the men they had lived up to their traditions.

"BLUNT!" he said, as he lay back in the stretcher again, and the stretcher-bearers hoisted him. "Care to walk down the hill beside me? These legs of mine hurt like the shabby side of sin. It'll do me good to talk. Got a smoke of any kind?"

Blunt silently felt about in his pockets, silently took out his cigarette case, as silently opened it, lit the other a cigarette and walked beside him—still silently.

"You know, Blunt, you did that," said the Colonel presently. "I sat up and watched you. I'll see that you get the credit for it."

Blunt said nothing.

"I never saw a man improve as you've done. At one time you couldn't make up your own mind on the simplest kind of proposition. You've changed. Wasn't there a girl, or something? Didn't you fall in love? Was that it?"

Blunt still said nothing.

"Anything between you and Kate Everleigh?"

"No, sir. Nothing."

"Um-m-m! Well, you owe her something. If it hadn't been for her, you'd have stayed behind. She asked me one night if you were going, and I told her no. But she stuck up for you so stoutly, and seemed to believe in you so thoroughly, that she half convinced me; and I gave you your chance."

"I—I didn't know that, sir. I'd an idea it was the other way round. I—I thought—that maybe she wanted to get rid of me."

"No. She believed in you, that's all; and she happened to be right. Women sometimes are."

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CHAPTER IV

KATE EVERLEIGH STIFLES A SQUEAL

IT WAS a sumptuous affair, the ball that they gave in honor of the returning Fiftieth; a whirl of gaiety, and laughter, and gorgeous color, amid an atmosphere of "welcome home again!" Blunt attended it with feelings that were indescribable. His pulse had throbbed, when he waited with a soldier's chance in front of him and nothing but a bugle blast between him and the fight of his career. He had learnt what the roar of a charging regiment behind him meant, and he had tasted the sweets of victory. But that kind of exultation was mild compared to the excitement that thrilled him now. The real conquest of his life lay yet ahead of him—in reach; and he felt that the key was in his hand.

Nine months ago the same Harry Blunt would have been the most puzzled and distracted being in the universe. He would have been tongue-tied, with the secret of Kate Everleigh's conversation with the Colonel in his keeping, and the knowledge that it was a secret that must die with him. Harmless or otherwise, he had no right to it; and he would have puzzled, and hesitated, and probably done nothing.

Now, however, he dismissed the secret from his mind, and, without making a single plan of any kind, went straight for his objective. The third dance was his with Kate Everleigh, and he led her straight out onto the terrace, where the Chinese lanterns were, that served only to prove how dark it was. It suited his mood to sit down by the big magnolia, on the very seats where she and the Colonel had sat and talked, one week before the Regiment left.

"Kate!" he said; and she started. It had been "Miss Everleigh" when he had said good-by to her. There was a quiet strength in his voice, too, that had been lacking before he went away. She began to tremble a little, without exactly knowing why. It was too dark for him to see that she was blushing, but he could hear that her breath was coming in little gasps.

"Colonel Lemesurer told me, just after that scrap that we were in, that I owe my chance of going to the front to you."

She did not answer. She seemed almost to have stopped breathing altogether.

"I suppose that's true, isn't it?"

"I—I don't——Only in a way——I——"

"Is it true?"

"Really, I——Colonel Lemesurer——"

"Is it true, Kate?"

"If Colonel Lemesurer said so, yes!"

"KATE! Listen to me!" He took her hand, holding it between both of his, and she made no effort to withdraw it. "Do you realize, little lady, that you can't monkey with a man's career like that without taking the consequences?"

No answer.

"Do you realize it?"

"The consequences? No. What are they?"

"Me! Kate, dear—— I—— Oh, Lord! What's the good of beating about the bush? Kitty, dear—I love you—love you with all my heart and soul! Kitty——"

He was down on one knee beside her, trying to look up in her face. For a moment she did not answer him. Then she laid one hand upon his shoulder.

"Harry!" He knew from her voice that she was smiling; it was soft and low but there was laughter in it—the laughter of relief. "Why didn't you speak sooner—before you went away?"

"I didn't dare—couldn't screw my courage up."

"Harry, I don't believe that. I didn't just think you were a man; I always knew it!"

"Little lady! Do you realize I'm still waiting for an answer?"

"Are you? Still?"

There followed a sudden sound of movement, and then silence, broken after an interval by a stifled squeal. The embrace of a six-foot officer, fit and wiry after six months of campaigning in the Hills, is likely to be more strenuous than he intends. But it is probable that no serious harm was done, for Mrs. Major Blunt is still one of the best looking and happiest matrons in the whole of India.

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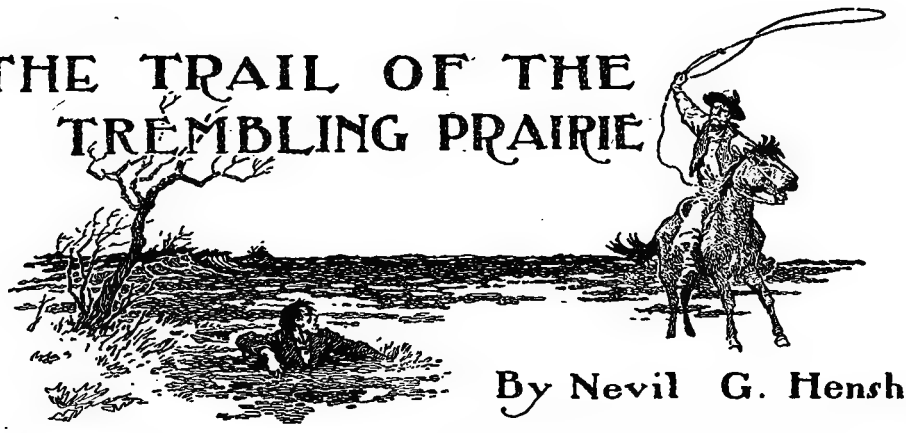
THE TRAIL OF THE TREMBLING PRAIRIE



By Nevil G. Henshaw

THIS is a story of Jean Le Bossu's —of the little hunchback who, in addition to being the best guide, hunter and trapper in all southwestern Louisiana, is also what, for want of a term, I might call an investigator of the wild. People come to him with their troubles and perplexities from all the great stretch of marsh and forest amid which he lives, and it is seldom that his keen wits do not unravel some trail which leads to peace and happiness. In the present instance I had asked him the method of his discoveries, and the tale had followed as an illustration of his reply.

"Method, M'sieu?" he began. "But I have no method. In such problems one usually finds the solution in the unexpected, for the finding of which there can be no certain rule. I use my eyes, I store away what I have seen, and at the proper time I draw upon this store.

"That is the whole secret, M'sieu. Observe and remember. If you see a bird upon a bough, do not let it be only a bird upon a bough for you. There are many birds and many boughs, and the knowledge of the difference between them may some day prove of value.

"But I will tell you a story, and then perhaps the matter will be made more clear to you:

IT BEGAN some years ago, one Spring when, worn out by a busy season, and feeling the need of a rest and change, I determined to set forth *au large*. Two years before I had made a journey eastward to the swamps, so now I proposed to turn my face toward the west, and the flat prairie country of which I had seen but little. Also there was a spot which I was especially anxious to visit.

This spot, the Trembling Prairie, was said to lie about the shores of a lake, being in truth but a crust of turf which had formed above the water itself. Stock was said to graze there in great numbers, and one might drive along with the heaviest of wagons in perfect safety, although, near the lake's shores, one would experience the vague trembling of the earth which had given the spot its name.

Of my journey across the prairies to this place I need tell you little. I traveled or rested as I felt inclined; sleeping sometimes at the little island of China-trees where the ranchers had built their homes, at others lying out upon the grass with the scattered herds. I had no plans, no duties. I was *au large*, and for the present life was one long holiday. Thus I drifted until finally I came in sight of my goal.

It was a lake, M'sieu; a still, oval lake, rimmed with marsh, and set in a wide circle of prairie. All about small, scattered dots marked the grazing herds, while in the distance the China-tree islands stood out dark and clear against the red of the sunset. And farther still, half-hidden at the edge of the horizon, a gray slant of roofs told of some village or settlement.

That night I camped beside the lake, and at daybreak I was exploring its encircling marsh. That it should prove rich in promise of game and skins was my hope, since the prairie-folk were chiefly concerned with their stock, and spent little time in hunting

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or trapping. Thus, when I found evidence of innumerable muskrats and mink, and even of otter, I felt well repaid for my visit, but as I pushed farther in toward the water, I found that the taking of these skins would prove no easy task.

It was the marsh, M'sieu, through which, for all my experience upon the coast, I found an ever-increasing difficulty in making my way. First I sank above my shoe-tops, next above my ankles, later almost to my knees. It was a strange, a curious ooze and, study it though I might, I could not learn its many contradictions. Here a smooth and apparently bottomless stretch of mud would bear me up without effort, while beyond a firm-looking grass-clump would let me through to my waist at the slightest pressure.

In the end, and when I was still half-way from the water's edge, I decided that I would put off any further exploration until I had become certain of my surroundings.

"You had best go slowly until you have learned the trick of this marsh, my friend," I said to myself. "At present you can be certain of but one thing. That which appears firm is bottomless. That which appears bottomless is firm."

But in this I erred, so that presently I found myself in danger. I had paused knee-deep amid the almost floating grass and, looking about for an easier way by which to return, I saw not far from me a reach of mud. Near the edge of this reach grows a small, stunted willow, its shoots stretching over the mud, its short, knotted trunk giving promise of firmer soil. Here, apparently, was the better route. Splashing over to the willow, I balanced for a moment upon its trunk, and sprang lightly out toward the reach.

IT WAS madness, M'sieu. Even in the brief moment that I was in the air I recognized the fact. What if the mud had proven firmer up to then? In the maze of contradictions which I had found in that marsh, how could I trust each reach to be the same?

Then I struck and began to go down, very slowly and smoothly, but with that terrible clutching pressure upon my feet and ankles which left no doubt of my predicament. I was in a species of quicksand where, without assistance, my case would be rendered hopeless.

But if I had been mad before, I now became sane. I did not struggle, thereby quickening my descent. I did not strive to push out with my arms, and so imprison them. Instead I remained motionless, and looked about me for any possible aid.

At my back the willow drooped its whip-like shoots almost within reach, and toward these I turned, very slowly and carefully, that the effort might cause the least possible increase in my sinking. In one hand I still retained my gun, and with this I fished cautiously until the shoots were within my grasp. Then, taking a long breath, I began the attempt of straining upward hand over hand.

Even now I do not like to think of that struggle. From the first I recognized its hopelessness, yet I persevered until, through sheer weariness, I was forced to acknowledge my defeat. The shoots were strong, bearing my weight, but the grip of the mud was stronger. Sometimes I would rise an inch—two, three inches, but always, in the drawing of the breath that must finally be drawn, I would sink back to my former level.

Later, with the waning of my strength, I was forced to face a more terrible alternative. Now it was no longer a matter of rising above my present level. The question was, could I keep from sinking below it?

As I have said, I was but half-way inside, and the marsh was of such a sort that, by peering over the low tufts of grass, I could catch some view of the prairie. So, hanging grimly on, I fixed my eyes upon the great, flat stretch, and prayed for some passing rider.

Ah, M'sieu, but that morning was an eternity. Each hour, as my grip relaxed, I sank a little lower—now above the waistline, now to the second button of my blouse. I prayed, I shouted, I strained my eyes until the ache of them was intolerable. Always they found only the great sweep of grass, empty save for its roaming herds.

Once a little band of steers trotted up to the edge of the marsh and picked their way inside until they reached soft ground. For a moment I thought that they were bound for the water, and a hope rose in me that, if I were careful, I might seize some passing leg or tail, and so be drawn to safety. But the steers paused far beyond my reach and, pawing in the ooze, lapped up the water that had formed in their hoof-prints. It

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was the end of my hopes, yet I watched them intently until, their thirst satisfied, they trotted away.

With the departure of the steers I seemed to lose all interest in the struggle. No help would come, I told myself. My arms were all but numb. Why suffer to put off that which was inevitable? Already I was up to the armpits. If I let go and thrust downward, all would be over in a moment.

AND so, with my mind made up, I gazed for an instant at the blue of the sky, and then cast a final glance toward the prairie. As before, I saw only the scattered dots of the herds. I was turning away in despair when, from a distant group, a single dot detached itself and bore swiftly down in my direction. That this dot was a horse I could not doubt, yet I curbed my impatience and saved my voice until, the horse coming closer, I saw that it bore a rider. Then I screamed and shouted at the top of my voice while the horseman, approaching within earshot, swung about in a long curve that would take him around the lake and so away from me.

An instant my fate hung in the balance. In that instant I put all of my final strength into a single shout. This time the horseman appeared to hesitate, pulling in his mount, yet turning backward and away from me. Then, as I weakly called again, he reached behind him, there came a flash of something bright down upon the prairie, and a moment later horse and rider were galloping to my rescue.

After this all was vague. I remember the horseman's careful approach, the skill with which he threw his lariat, the welcome touch of its loop about my shoulders. Then came a sudden strain, a tightening of the rope, a sharp snap, a stab of anguish, and I knew no more.

When I became conscious again, I found myself in bed, in a room dimly lit by the twilight. From my head to my heels I was one great ache, while in my arm there was a pain which stood out more sharply than the rest. I groaned as I moved, and at the sound a man came hurrying to the bedside. He was a tall man, of middle age, pleasant of face, lean of figure, and with that ease of carriage which comes only to the finished horseman.

"*Bien*," said he. "That is better, my friend. You have come out of it with only a broken arm, which I have set to the best of my ability. Had you been able to adjust my rope, even the arm would have been saved."

"I have been a fool," said I. "Also I have much to thank you for!"

At this he smiled—the rare smile of one who ever underrates his kind actions.

"Perhaps not so much a fool as a venturesome stranger," he returned. "Had you inquired, you would have found that the marsh was impassable. Even the stock have learned to beware of it. As for your thanks, you owe them elsewhere. I would have ridden on and left you, had it not been for my little Ninon. She it was who heard your cry, and recognized it as that of one in distress. She it was who forced me to investigate. The rest was only what any other man would have done.

"But come. I have talked too much already. For the present let it satisfy you that I am Clovis Viator, and that I am your friend."

NEXT morning, although very stiff and sore, I was able to leave my bed for the gallery of the house, and here began a friendship that has lasted to this day.

Of Viator himself a few words will suffice. He was a rancher, and his stock roamed at will about the China-tree island in whose shelter he had built his home. Unlike most of our kind, he had married in later life, and he had lost his wife at the birth of his only child.

Now this child had reached the age of nine. Upon her Viator lavished a care and devotion such as are seldom seen. She was his companion at all times, in the house, about the corrals, even upon his rounds of the prairie, when she rode behind his saddle, clinging to a belt which he wore for that special purpose.

She was a bright, fairy-like little creature; with the first touch of her tiny hand I became her slave. Also, as Viator had said, she had been my real savior; for, had not her quick ear caught my cry, the marsh would have claimed its prey.

Those were happy days, out there upon the Trembling Prairie. They were kindly folk, were Viator and his little Ninon, and they took me into their hearts as if I had been of their own blood.

"No, no, Bossu," they said, when I was

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once more able to travel. "Now you are one of us, and we doubt if we will ever let you go."

So I stayed on, helping when I was able, enjoying each moment of our companionship, wondering if ever I should be able to repay the kindness that I had received.

II

THE weeks slipped by toward the end of Summer. I was reluctantly considering my departure, when I stumbled on the incident which makes possible this tale. It was a pack of cards that began it all; an old pack that I had discovered in a cupboard, with which I proposed to build the little Ninon one of those boxes for the making of smoke-rings. I had just begun, with the pack spread out upon the table before me, when Viator came into the room.

"What are you doing?" he asked, and, when I had explained, he shook his head, gathering up the cards into a pack again.

"No, no, Bossu," said he. "Not with these cards. True, they stand for that which is impossible, but they are a relic, and as such I would keep them."

"You mean?" I asked.

"That they are the cards of Miguez, the gambler," he said, and told me the story.

"This Miguez was a stranger who drifted into this country at the close of the War," he began. "He was a small, dark man with the keen black eyes and well-shaped hands and feet of a Spaniard. Settling at St. Martin, the village that you have seen at the edge of the prairie, he rented a room above the principal coffee-house and opened up a gambling establishment.

"Now at that time, despite the war, there was still some money in this country, and its people were filled with that love of chance which is the heritage of our kind. Thus Miguez did not lack for patrons, and in time he prospered greatly. Yet, to his credit, I must add that he always played with the utmost honesty and fairness.

"Always at his games Miguez kept upon his right hand his bank—a heavy box of polished wood, fitted with trays in which were hollowed circular grooves. Within these grooves the gold-pieces that he had won lay in shining rows, and all hereabout contributed toward them, save only my father.

"Yet, despite his abstinence, my father was the only one of whom Miguez could truly speak as friend. Enemies, patrons, hangers-on the gambler had in abundance, but there was no other who thought of him without some hope of loss or gain.

"'And that is why we get on so well together, Miguez,' my father would often say. 'Once let us deal a pack together, and our friendship is over.'

"THUS the months passed until, at the end of his first year, Miguez met with sudden and unexpected disaster. It was his success that caused it; the number and weight of the gold-pieces that, by now, well-nigh filled the many grooves of his bank. People spoke of those gold-pieces, spreading the news of them farther and farther until finally it reached the ears of that great outlaw of your own country—Le Sauvage.

"Now, although your journey was a long one, Bossu, and although it was not known to us at that time, there is a short cut from your marshes here. Let one but hold through the Grand Woods, avoiding the prairie, and the distance is lessened by one-half. Thus, knowing of this short cut, Le Sauvage acted in his usual manner.

"One morning the proprietor of the coffee-house found upon his door a note, fastened with a knife. It bore the name of Miguez. Upon opening it, the gambler found only a few lines. It ran:

> Monsieur, I congratulate you upon the reports of your success. Also, I am anxious to know if these reports are true. Therefore, that I may see for myself, you will bring your bank to the western edge of the prairie at sunset, where my messenger will be waiting to receive it. Should I be forced to come for it myself, you may regret the incident.

"Now Miguez was no coward. Neither did he wish to lose the fruits of his skill. Therefore he laid his plans at once and, had it not been for that unknown short cut, they might have proved successful.

"Upon his table the gambler had a second box of polished wood in which he kept his chips and counters. This box was smaller than the bank, but like it was fitted with a lock. That afternoon, having locked both boxes, Miguez tied them to his saddle, and departed for the western edge of the prairie. That night he returned without either of the boxes and, having snatched a few hours of sleep, prepared to settle the rest of his affairs.

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"To the proprietor of the coffee-house he made some explanations. He had kept the appointment for fear lest, instead of a single messenger, Le Sauvage might have sent a small band which, if disappointed, might ride in and capture him. But despite his fears he had found only a single outlaw, to whom he had delivered the locked box of chips.

"To deliver this box the messenger must make a hard night's ride and, having discovered the trick, Le Sauvage could not possibly return for his vengeance until some time after sunset. By then Miguez would be well upon his way to another State. As for the gold, it was too heavy to carry with him in his flight, but he had disposed of it to his satisfaction. Then, having bid farewell to all, Miguez set forth at noon, saying that he would stop for a last word with my father.

"BUT, thanks to the unknown short cut, the messenger made the marshes before daybreak where, having discovered Miguez's deception, Le Sauvage at once prepared for his revenge. Being unable to leave himself, he despatched a picked band under the leadership of his lieutenant, The Wolf, and this band, by hard riding, managed to reach St. Martin upon the very heels of the departing gambler. Here, from the terrified inhabitants, they soon learned their victim's plans, whereupon they galloped away in furious pursuit.

"Now The Wolf was a leader of little imagination. In matters of revenge he had but one mode of procedure, and this he put into execution when they finally overhauled the fugitive at a spot before this very island. Young though I was, I can remember it perfectly, for I saw it from my hiding-place at the edge of the trees.

"First came Miguez, galloping madly; behind him the outlaws, grimly confident, holding their fire until it should not be wasted. When he had all but made the trees Miguez's horse caught its foot in a hole, stumbling and throwing its rider over its head. The gambler was up in a flash, but that flash had been his undoing.

"Seeing this, he made the best of his end. From his coat he drew one of those short pistols such as are used by his kind, and fired twice, but without effect. Then, weaponless and unable to escape, he drew himself up to his full height, and faced his executioners.

"The outlaws drew rein. They formed in line, leveled their pieces, and fired a volley. They shot him like a dog, Bossu, and after he was down they searched him to his skin, tearing the clothes from his body. Then, furious at their disappointment, they fired a second volley into this island and galloped away to report to their leader.

"Throughout that day Miguez lay where he had fallen, but when night came, and all danger of the outlaws' return was past, my father brought the poor, shattered body inside, together with its belongings that had been scattered about the prairie. Next day Miguez was buried at St. Martin, where my father learned all that had gone before.

"With this knowledge, and with his further knowledge of Miguez himself, my father felt that he could easily account for the gold. The gambler had hidden it somewhere upon his journey to the messenger, meaning to have it unearthed by a friend and sent to him when he was safely settled again. That this friend was himself my father could not doubt, especially as Miguez, when killed, was upon his way for a final word with him.

"Thus my father argued and, as Miguez was without friends or relatives, he felt that the gold now belonged to him. So, as did others, he sought its secret for many months only to be balked at every turn—finally to die as ignorant of its hiding-place as he had been before.

"So that is the history of the cards, Bossu, and that is why I wish to preserve them. They were among the few small possessions of Miguez that were found scattered about the prairie."

VIATOR paused while I, alive with excitement, began to question him.

"*Dieu*, Viator," I cried. "This is indeed a story. Why did you not tell me before? A mystery such as this is the salt of my life. I may add that I have unearthed more than one buried treasure. As for this one, we can at least have another try at it. Come, those cards first! They may tell us something. And the other belongings? You have them also?"

But Viator shared none of my enthusiasm. Rather he seemed annoyed, distressed. He thrust the cards into his pocket with a haste that I could not but understand.

"No, Bossu," said he. "All that is over

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and done with, and we will let it remain so. This mystery haunted my father to his grave. I do not intend to have it do the same with myself."

"But think of the gold," I cried. "You say that there was a lot of it. It will make you rich. It will——"

Viator held up his hand.

"Let it rest, Bossu," said he, quietly, but in a tone that I had come to recognize as final. "I am rich enough, and I am contented. I have my home, my stock, and above all my little Ninon. It would offend *le bon Dieu* were I to covet this dead man's gold."

After this I spoke no more of the matter, but in a way it affected the last days of my stay upon the prairie. I was restless, I was puzzled. The great sweep of grass now held a mystery for me—a mystery that I was not to be allowed to approach.

Viator noticed my attitude, but it was not until the actual moment of my departure that he spoke of it. He had ridden with me upon my way as far as the lake. Behind him as usual was perched the little Ninon.

"Farewell, Bossu, and forgive me in the matter of the gold," said he. "I should not have mentioned it, or, having done so, I should have allowed you to search. But you know my feelings. I can say no more."

"Nor should you," said I. "True, I have been impatient; but it was only because I hoped that in some way I might be able to repay your kindness. Remember this, Viator; and, should there be any need, do not fail to call upon me. Perhaps you may need the gold some day, after all."

"Perhaps," smiled Viator. "And in that event you may count upon me to send for you. It is a promise."

Thus I left him. Looking back from a distance, I saw that he had turned and clasped the little Ninon, as if to forearm himself against my departure. He was a good friend, was Viator; a true one, and his love for his fairy-like daughter was the most beautiful thing that I have ever seen.

III

I RETURNED to the marsh and my affairs, and for a year I heard no more of my friend. Then, putting in at Anse le Vert upon a fishing trip, I found a letter waiting for me. It was from Viator, and it was three days old. Also, it contained but a single line. It ran:

I am in trouble—come.

I received the letter at noon. At sunset the care of my boat was arranged for, and I was already well upon my journey. Choosing the short cut and tramping half the night, I managed to make the Trembling Prairie by the following afternoon.

Now that Summer we had had a drought, and throughout the marsh its ravages had been plain. But here, upon the prairie, it was as if I was seeing the sun's dreadful work for the first time. The grass was scorched. The earth was baked. The *coulées* were dry. The lake had shrunk to a pool. And there, in the midst of that parched and dreadful wilderness, Viator sat his horse alone at the spot of our parting.

"*Bien*, Bossu," said he. "I knew that you would not fail me. I have waited for you each day since sending my letter."

His very voice was changed, M'sieu. It was flat, it was weary, and no trace of its former cheery heartiness remained. As for his face, it was like that of an old man—gray, and drawn, and bitten deep by furrows of care. Also he drooped limply in his saddle—in such a one a certain sign of the end.

"What is it, Viator?" I gasped. "What calamity has overtaken you?"

But Viator shook his head.

"You must see for yourself," said he. "I can not tell you."

We set forth toward the island in silence. When we reached it Viator led the way to his front gallery without a word. Here, in a shaded spot, was a small, wheeled chair, and in the chair sat the little Ninon.

Ah, M'sieu, but that was something sad to see. The change in Viator was as nothing compared to the one which I now found in his child. Gone was the bright, dancing, fairy-like little creature of a year before. In her place was a frail, hollow-eyed shadow, bent and twisted and pinched with pain. Yet she gave a cry of welcome at sight of me, stretching forth her pitiful little arms with the slow, awkward gesture of one who is otherwise incapable of movement.

As for myself, I could not speak; but Viator called a cheery greeting, even smiling as he kissed the little one, despite the agony in his eyes. Then, motioning me to follow him, he passed into the house.

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"You see," said he when we were inside. "It was my horse—the old, trusted one. He had a sudden flash of terror, and the little one was behind me. When he reared she lost her hold. She struck heavily against the saddle, and her back——"

He paused and added after a moment:

"But that is all that I can tell you, Bossu. There are some things of which one can not speak. However, there are other matters, and we will now pass to them."

Of these other matters Viator spoke at length, although he considered them only in their bearing upon his present distress. Ever since my departure he had been unfortunate. First had come charbon, killing off the greater part of his stock, to replenish which he had mortgaged his home. Then had come the accident, the many visits of the doctor from St. Martin, the heavy bills which necessitated a second mortgage, and, later, a sale of the newly acquired steers. And last of all had come the drought, wiping out the pitiful herd that still remained.

But the fact of his being penniless was not what troubled Viator. It was his being penniless at this particular time. From the first the doctor had given him no hope for the recovery of the child. She could never walk or move her body again, he had said. He could only relieve her pain.

ONE week before, however, the doctor had ridden out with a piece of news. A great surgeon from across the water was in the far-off city of New York, he said, brought there to cure the back of a rich man's daughter. This surgeon would remain in the city for three weeks and, if the little Ninon could be brought to him, it was certain that he could cure her also. He had performed miracles in such cases, only these miracles must be paid for accordingly.

"So there it is," said Viator in conclusion. "Only three weeks, and already one of them is gone. I have sought everywhere, and I have failed. My friends are kind, but we have had a bad year, and they are little better off than myself. It is fast driving me mad."

"I have had a good season, and I have put something away," I began. "I love the little one as if she were my own, and she has also saved my life. It would be a privilege if——"

Viator smiled sadly.

"I understand, Bossu, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart," he interrupted. "But it would not suffice. The amount is too large."

"I see," said I. "So your one hope is the gambler's gold."

"Perhaps I was mad enough to think so when I sent for you," replied Viator. "I see now, though, that I desired chiefly your company and sympathy. How can my misfortune render that quest less hopeless than it has always been?"

But this I would not allow.

"Come, Viator," said I. "You must not despair yet. At least stick to this, your final hope, until I have failed. And now we will begin. You still have the effects of Miguez found upon the prairie?"

"All of them," he returned. "Even the clothes, since my father furnished a suit of his own for the burial. It was his wish to keep everything belonging to the dead man, and I have carried it on."

"One thing more," said I. "When did your father search, and where?"

"At once," replied Viator. "First in the *coulées* where one with little time might most easily hide a treasure. It was a terrible Summer, almost like the present one, and there was but little water.

"He dragged those *coulées* to which Miguez could possibly have had access, and even dug them up. Had the gold been there he would most certainly have found it. Next he tried the outlying line of undergrowth near which Miguez met the messenger. After that there remained only the prairie which, through its size, he was finally forced to abandon as hopeless."

"So," said I. "Now we will begin our own investigations. First let us look over the effects of Miguez."

GOING into another room, Viator returned with an armful of things which he placed upon the table before me. Of small belongings, such as are carried in one's pockets, there were seven—a pencil, a handkerchief, a tobacco-pouch, a match-box, a short pistol of two shots, a small knife, and lastly the pack of cards. Of these articles I laid aside five. Then, with the knife and cards before me, I began my investigation.

"If Miguez buried the gold, he perhaps used this knife," said I. "Yet it is free from any grain of earth."

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"Miguez owned another, larger knife," replied Viator. "Afterward it was not found."

"*Bien*," said I, laying the knife aside. "Then we come now to these cards. Miguez, when killed, was hurrying with his secret to your father. Upon discovering his pursuers, he must have wished to make some record of this secret so that, in the event of his death, it might be carried on. He had a pencil, and you say that no paper of any sort was found. Had the outlaws found one, they would have made a search. Thus, if your gambler wrote, he used a card."

"My father thought of that," said Viator. "He searched them a dozen times, and there was not a line on any one of them."

To this I replied by laying out the cards in their different suits, finding, when through, that there was no four of clubs.

"*Dieu!*" gasped Viator. "We never thought of that. And so he used a four."

"Your gambler was clever," said I. "Most men would have used the ace. And now for this vanished four."

Taking up the clothes I examined them closely, and found that they were still in a good state of preservation despite their treatment at the hands of the outlaws. Indeed that terrible volley at close range had torn a great rent in the upper garments, a rent of small round holes, now sealed stiffly together by the coagulation of the blood. It was to this rent that I now turned my attention, while Viator shrugged hopelessly.

"At least that was tried well," said he. " A thorough search was made for hidden pockets, and the cloth was felt for a crackle of paper. As you observe, little could have been hidden. He was cut almost in two."

Yet I persevered, finally abandoning the coat and pinning my hope to the vest. And then, when I had all but despaired, I found it. It was a clever pocket in a clever place —just a tiny slit in the lower rim of the left armhole—and when I had thrust a finger and thumb inside, I came upon something thin and flat.

Stuck it was to the inner lining, so that we were forced to cut the cloth away, and when this was done there lay the missing card, glued by the gambler's blood to its hiding-place. Thus had it escaped the searchers as, through the stiffness of the soaked and dried cloth surrounding it, its presence could not be felt.

IT WAS a triumph for me, yet an empty one, since, save for its upper edge, the card was only a mass of blood-stained pulp. Upon this upper edge, in pencil, was written the name Viator, followed by two lines.

The gold is underground in the prairie at——

they ran, and broke off into the pulpy mass below. Thus, through a trifling circumstance, I found myself upon a blind trail. Had the card been thrust into the pocket from the other end, the directions would have been preserved, and all would have been clear.

But if in my case this find produced only regret, its effect upon Viator was wholly different. At once he became joyously excited, laughing, shouting, embracing me, and declaring that now all would be well. Then he rushed triumphantly outside to bear the good news to his little one.

As for myself, I thought of those miles of sun-scorched grass, and for the first time the true hopelessness of my search dawned upon me. At that moment I was wholly discouraged. Instead of aid, I had brought my friend only a futile hope, which must be followed by a terrible awakening. By eliminating all other hiding-places, old Viator had decided that the gold must be buried in the prairie. Through a simpler method I had merely proved the correctness of his decision.

Of the efforts that followed my discovery a word will suffice. Hopeless as the affair had proved at first, it was doubly hopeless now. True, we knew positively that the gold was in the prairie, but how were we to search for it? Given two years instead of two weeks, we could by digging scarce hope to make any impression upon that great stretch of grass.

Yet for four blistering days we haunted that portion of the prairie through which Miguez must have passed upon his way to the messenger, hoping, planning, seeking vainly for some clue. It was a barren, desolate spot, set with three *coulées* in a row, and of landmarks there were but two. The first, the rotting stump of a hackberry-tree, stood to the east of the *coulées*. The second, an old sugar-kettle, now covered with turf, stood to the west. Both landmarks lay upon a line with the central *coulée*, a half-mile or more apart, and at first sight of them I felt some hope.

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But Viator quickly undeceived me. As the only landmarks, they were among the first places searched by his father, he said. The baked earth of that Summer would have shown any sign of digging, and the prairie had been carefully examined for a hundred yards about each spot.

Yet those three *coulées* and those two landmarks occupied my thoughts to the exclusion of all else. About them hung a vague idea that I could not grasp—an idea in which I ever sensed a fault. Then, upon the third day, I grasped both idea and fault in a single flash.

IT WAS in the afternoon, and we had already started back to the island when, turning in my saddle, I caught *coulées* and landmarks from a new angle. Seen thus they formed a perfect square set in its center by the middle *coulée*. For an instant my eyes glowed at sight of such a hiding-place. Then I thought of the *coulée* occupying that place, and the hope of my idea was banished by its fault.

But, swift though it was, Viator had not failed to catch my expression.

"Bossu!" he cried. "You have found something. I see it in your face."

"I thought so," I replied, "but you will prove me wrong. It depends upon the thoroughness of your father's search of the *coulées*."

"Then it is useless," said Viator. "No man could have done more."

Upon the fourth day Viator gave up entirely. Starting in the black despair of his awakening from my vain discovery, it surprised me that he kept up so long. Yet he was calm enough in his defeat—calm and hard.

"*Bien*, Bossu," said he when we returned that night. "We shall go out no more. You have done all that you could, and I thank you. A poor saying, perhaps, but my heart goes with it. Also you must return to-morrow. You have said that your boat is in commission, and I know what that means. When the last week is over I will try to take things up again."

It was sad, M'sieu, but that was a busy Summer, and I had no choice. I left next morning at sunrise, and as I went my eyes were dim at thought of the still little figure that I had left behind in its wheeled chair. As before, Viator went with me as far as the lake. There he shook hands in silence, despite the question in his eyes.

"What is it, Viator?" I asked, thinking only of the question.

"Your look two days ago," he replied. "I have wanted to ask you, but you declared it hopeless. And yet——"

"It is," said I. "Yet, if your father had been less thorough with the *coulées*, if he had not searched all three of them——"

"But he searcehd only the two," interrupted Viator. "The central one is since his time."

"You mean——" I cried.

"That it was not there at the time of the search," returned Viator. "I thought once to tell you, but what would have been the good? How could Miguez use a *coulée* that was not there?"

But faced with this new turn in the affair, I did not answer him. Puzzled, bewildered, I stared out upon the prairie, and tried to read its meaning. As I did so my eye caught the rim of the marsh about the lake, and on the instant a picture leaped into my brain. Once more I saw myself slowly sinking in the ooze, once more the steers came down to drink, stamping the earth with the movements which, even in that moment, I had stored within my memory. Then I read the riddle and turned to Viator with a shout of triumph.

"Man, man!" I cried. "Why did you not tell me this before? I see it all now. Those *coulées* upon each end, the landmarks, they form a perfect square. Your gambler was a careful man. He was not one to dig at tree or kettle, where the searchers must come first of all. He cut a square of turf. He dug deep. It was a terrible Summer, and the wound in the earth did not heal. Then came the fall rains, the slow spreading of the lake underground, the seep of water into the hiding-place. The steers found it. They used it from day to day, now a drink for one, now for two, the depression ever widening beneath their hoofs. That is their custom, is it not?"

"Always," said Viator. "The *coulées* grow larger year by year, as they tread down the banks. But I am dazed. I can not grasp it all. You mean——"

Perhaps I was mad to raise his hopes again upon such a chance, but for the moment I felt sure, and in any event his heart would have broken.

"I mean that I have read the message of

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Miguez," I cried. "'The gold is underground in the prairie at the center of a square,' it runs. Draw a line about the *coulées*, the hackberry, and the kettle, and the square is yours. Come, Viator. Let us hurry back. God is good. We have won."

AND win we did, although it took three days of awful toil beneath a merciless sun. But the heat was our ally in that it had left only a shallow pool. When this was drained we dug like madmen. Counting upon the shift of the soil we dug from the center in a circle, and upon the second day we made our first find. It was a knife, ancient and rusted; and when it had been cleaned Viator identified it, having seen it as a boy. After this, made certain by this evidence of the gambler's craft, we dug with redoubled energy until, at sunset upon the following day, we found the bank.

Heavy, brass-bound, and of an imperishable wood, it had withstood the damp of years, and as we lifted it we rejoiced at its weight. Then Viator knocked off the top, and the gold-pieces once more glowed in the waning sunlight—rows upon rows of them, packed in little grooved trays, one above the other.

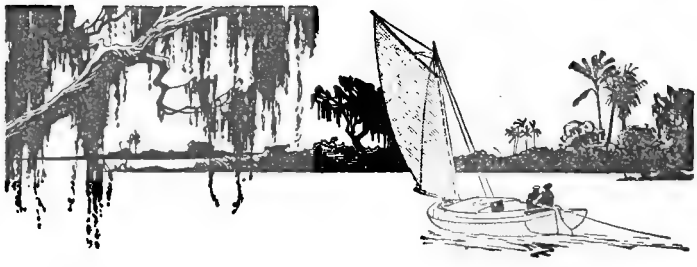
It was beautiful, M'sieu, that gold. It was the most precious treasure that I have ever seen. The pieces shone for us with almost a holy light, and in each one of them was mirrored the little one's patient face.

So that is all, M'sieu. If you have followed me closely, you have seen how even the most dreadful experience may teach some lesson of future value.

Viator left that night for the great city. When I saw him the following Summer the little one was straight and strong, and the old look of happiness had come back into his eyes. For the rest, I am due at the Trembling Prairie again in less than a month.

The little Ninon has grown, and she has fulfilled the beautiful promise of her childhood. Therefore Viator will lose a daughter and gain a son, and I am to bear him company in the first lonely days that must follow the event.

Such things make one consider the passing of time, M'sieu. Were it not that my heart denies it, I would almost think that I am growing old.



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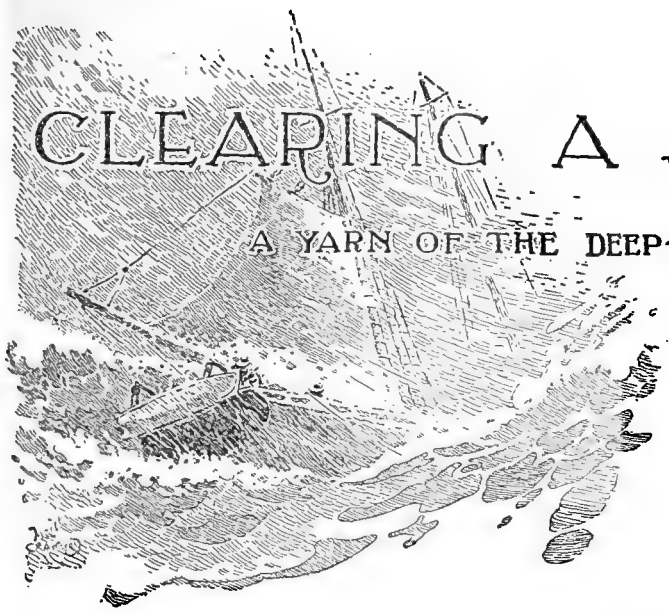

CLEARING A SNARL

A YARN OF THE DEEP-SEA TRAWLERS

BY
Frederick
William
Wallace

CLARENCE DICKEY, fish merchant and vessel owner, shook the snow off his overcoat and thrust back the roller-top of his desk. As he overhauled the pile of letters and telegrams on the blotter, the corrugations of worry on his forehead seemed to advance until they reached the scanty patch of iron-gray hair at the back of his head.

"John," he said to the clerk checking up a tally-sheet in the back office. "Jest take a shoot down t' th' wharf an' bring Cap'en Winslow up here. Hurry, now!"

When his son-in-law, oilskin-clad and rubber-booted, swung into the office in the wake of the clerk, Dickey greeted him with ill-concealed anxiety in his voice.

"Well, Harry, are you goin' to get away this afternoon?"

"I've jest been up to the Signal-Office now," answered the other, throwing his oilskin hat on the floor and flopping into a chair. "Bulletin ain't promisin' much for t'morrow. Heavy no'west winds an' snow. Glass down to twenty-nine three. No fishin' weather, Mr. Dickey."

The old gentleman stamped in vexation and scanned the correspondence on the desk.

"Good land, Harry!" he almost shouted. "This'll never do! Here's jest a bare week to Lent an' not a pound of fish have I in th' whole place. Look at these orders! Look at these telegrams! An' all a howlin' for fish.

"Here's a four-thousand-pound order from Cassidy—says if I don't fill his order he'll take all his business away from me. Here's a wire from Collins an' Hazen wantin' t' know right away if I kin fill their bill.

"Four o' them telegrams are from Zigler Fish Company—our best customers—wantin' t' know when I'm shippin' their stuff. I wouldn't want t' lose their custom; but what kin I do? There ain't been a vessel in with a trip for a week now an' none o' th' boat-fishermen hev made a set for a fortnight——"

"We don't make th' weather, Mr. Dickey," interrupted Winslow calmly.

"I know that," fumed the merchant petulantly. "But if I don't fill these orders, I might as well shut up shop, for all this business'll go to the Bay Shore Fish Company."

The fishing-skipper regarded a large office calendar thoughtfully.

"I wouldn't worry about that, Mr. Dickey," he said, after a pause. "Th' Bay Shore Comp'ny ain't any better off. They can't git any fish themselves——"

"Oh, can't they?" interposed Dickey. "Well, Harry, that's jest where you're makin' a mistake, for I happen t' know that they're getting a vessel in very soon——"

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"Who's th' man?" ejaculated the other in surprise.

"Fred Hanson in th' *Minnehaha*," answered the merchant with a sigh. "I happened t' be up in th' telegraph office when Hanson wired in from Cobtown to th' Company, and I managed t' get a glimpse o' th' wire. Says he has fifty thousand o' fish aboard an' he's offerin' it to them at three cents. They'll give it to him, an' be glad to get his trip."

Winslow whistled.

"Oho! So he's got fifty thousand, has he? An' he's a-goin' t' break his contract with you for th' sake of an extra quarter of a cent. Nice kind of a swab he is!"

DICKEY nodded.

"That's the way of the world," he said. "Hanson's been selling to me all Winter—I made a contract with him—an' now he gives me th' go-by when I need his fish th' most."

Swinging around in his chair, he laid his hand upon the skipper's oil-coated shoulder.

"Harry!" he said slowly. "These people are out to break me. They've been after Hanson all Winter, an' he's gone to them at last. Contracts ain't worth a cuss unless they're made by a man that kin keep his word.

"I'm in a fix—a bad fix. I didn't cal'late we'd git sich a run o' bad weather, an' I promised all these people that I'd fill their orders for Lent. I want to extend my business, an' I had a chance o' makin' a big thing, for all these Western dealers promised t' give me their orders.

"If Hanson hadn't gone back on me, I c'd ha' filled th' most o' these bills, but as things are now, I'm afraid I'm goin' t' be hard hit, an' th' Bay Shore Company'll jest step in an' capture all th' trade I've bin years a buildin' up."

Winslow pursed his lips and when he spoke there was a steely ring in his voice.

"What price kin you offer my gang for a trip?"

"Harry, ef ye'll risk makin' a trip for me, ye kin sell me all ye kin bring in for three an' a half cents a pound—haddock, cod, hake, cusk an' all—steak or scrod—I'll make no grade. You'll get that, an' not a cent less."

The skipper nodded and the merchant waited on tenter-hooks for his answer. It was blowing a gale outside—squalls and snow-storms—and the weather had been bad for almost two weeks. All the Anchorville fleet were in port or at anchor in shelter-harbors waiting for the weather to moderate. In consequence, with the great fish demand for the Lenten season, prices were high and dealers desperate. Fishing in such weather was risky work, and Dickey knew that he was asking his son-in-law to take a big chance.

Winslow thought it over, too; thought of his wife and baby; thought of his men and their wives and families. Winslow knew exactly what he would be up against as soon as he hauled outside Anchorville Heads, while the fish merchant did not.

"What do ye say, Harry?" queried the other hesitatingly. "Will you take a chance? I—I—I'll look after Isabel an' th' boy ef anything should happen——"

He paused awkwardly.

"'Tain't them so much," replied Winslow slowly. "It's th' men. You know what'll happen ef I lose any o' them in th' dories? You know what it is t' have a man's wife an' kids a comin' to you an' sayin' ye threw their father's life away? An' all for to fill a dealer's order! Cuss them an' their telegrams! But—I'll go!"

Dickey wrung the young skipper's hand silently.

THE snow lay deep on the *Isabel Winslow's* decks when the skipper jumped aboard of her. In the rigging the nor'west gale howled a mournful note. Below, in cabin and forecastle, the gang were loafing or overhauling gear. When the skipper swung down the cabin-gangway, Jimmy Thomas looked up from the pile of gangings he was hitching, and inquired,

"What's th' bulletin, skipper?"

"Nawthin' promisin'," replied Winslow. "Same old thing—more snow, more blow."

"Cal'late we won't go out to-day then," remarked a man, hooking up a tub of trawl.

"You're cal'latin' wrong," answered Winslow with a smile. "Th' sooner we git out, th' more money we'll make. I've th' promise o' three an' a half cents a pound ef we git in before February fifth. To-day's th' twenty-fifth o' January, an' ef we're goin' t' draw them share-checks, we'd better be movin'."

"Dirty weather, skipper," said a man, shaking his head ominously.

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"Aye, it's dirty enough, I won't deny," returned the skipper. "But th' fish are on Brown's Bank, an' Brown's is jest a good hundred an' fifty miles from where we are now. I cal'late we'd better git a bit nearer them.

"We'll h'ist away at four o'clock, so there's plenty o' time for any of ye t' take yer dunnage ashore. I won't get sore on any man that wants t' quit, but Fred Hanson's lyin' into Cobtown Harbor with fifty thousand an' he's leavin' Clarence Dickey in th' lurch by breakin' his contract an' sellin' to th' Bay Shore concern. Dickey has always treated us pretty white an' I cal'late th' least we kin do is t' help him out now."

II

WINSLOW kicked the snow off his boots and stepped quietly into the bedroom.

"Is he asleep?" he whispered.

Mrs. Winslow drew aside the curtains of the cradle and gazed into the downy blankets where the first and only scion of the Winslow house lay with his eyes screwed tight in the slumber of babyhood.

"Yes, he's knockin' out a reg'lar lay-off calk, Isabel," said the skipper softly, as he bent over the basket-bed. "Lord, but he's a dog, ain't he, sweetheart? Listen to th' snore of him! Jest like an ol' trawler after a straight night an' day set. Oh, but he's a boy an' a half, dear, an' I'm sure sorry to leave you both."

As he stooped over the cradle, a drop of chilly water fell from his oilskins on to the little chubby arm which lay over the blanket. There was a movement in the woolly nest, and a pair of blue eyes opened slowly and blinked at the light.

"Lordy, Isabel, I've woke him up!"

And Harry smiled quizzically at his wife.

"Yes, you've woke him up," returned Mrs. Winslow with a laugh. "Come in here and drown the poor dear with all the drippings off those fishy oil-clothes of yours."

She stooped down and lifted the baby out.

"Look, dearie! Papa's going away. Say good-by!"

The youngster stretched out a chubby fist and crowed. The blue eyes wandered all over the great yellow-clad figure before him. Under the sou'wester he recognized a familiar face.

"Oo!"

The tiny pink fingers closed on his father's uplifted hand.

"See him, Isabel!" cried he delightedly. "He's shakin' hands. Feel th' grip of him! He's closin' on my finger like a squid. A grip like a trawl-hauler he has, by gosh! Ain't he th' deuce an' all, Isabel? Good-by, sonny!"

And he whipped the oilskin hat from his head and kissed the little squirming, chuckling bundle nestling in mother's arms.

The baby restored to the cradle again, crowing delightedly, Winslow turned away with a queer feeling in his throat. Through the window he could see the whirling snow and a vista of bleak water beyond. Cold, harsh, cruel it seemed; bitter, bleak, sere. He felt the thick carpet under his heavily booted feet; felt the comforting warmth of the room; gazed on the cozy furnishings of his home, and sniffed at the perfumed air of the apartment. Then he turned to go with a sigh, while his pretty wife followed him to the door.

Heedless of his streaming clothes, she threw her arms around his neck, and her voice choked with sobs.

"Oh, Harry, must you go? Can't you give up this trip? Never mind father! What is his business compared to the wives and children of the men who toil for him?"

The young skipper placed his hands upon her shoulders and smiled.

"Sweetheart!" he said. "If all fishermen were to think thataway—there'd be no fishin'. Pshaw! what's a little weather, anyhow? Lordy, sweetheart, we'll go out in this an' be as snug as a bug in a rug. Good warm bunks, plenty to eat, an' an able vessel what kin stand anythin'. Gosh! Fishin' ain't as bad as you women think it is——"

"But look what some of the vessels have gone through lately."

"Fishermen's yarns," answered her husband assuringly. "Biggest liars on earth is fishermen. They tell them yarns so's t' git bigger prices an' t' keep down competition. Don't want everybody goin' a fishin', so they make out it's a hard life. Well, good-by, dearie. Take good care o' th' boy. Lordy, I wouldn't lose him for all th' fish in th' sea!"

And squaring his shoulders, he stepped out into the whirling snow. Butting his head into the storm, he plowed along the road.

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"What a dog's life we live," he murmured. "Yes, a dog's life! Leave a home like that—clean, cozy, warm an' comfortable, to herd in a vessel's dirty cabin with gurry-stinks an' bilge.

"Well, th' whole gang of us is in th' same boat. They've all got nice homes themselves, an' wives an' children—wives that love them. An' yet they've got t' leave them same as me. Whew, ain't she breezin' some!"

He swung down the wharf murmuring, "Ay, a good wife is a sailor's sheet-anchor."

III

THE *Isabel Winslow's* gang had discussed the situation from all points of view while their skipper was uptown, and all had made their decisions. Winslow stepped into the office for a moment to fix up a little business, and then jumped aboard the vessel.

Shoving back the foc'sle slide, he sung out: "All up below! Get under way!"

Having passed the word, he went down aft and repeated the command to the cabin gang.

The men were still there. Silently they pulled on boots, mittens and oilskins, while the skipper sat smoking on a locker, wondering who had gone ashore.

"All ready, skipper!" cried Jimmy Thomas from the deck.

Winslow jumped up the companion and glanced over the gang stamping around the snow-laden decks.

"Who went ashore?" he inquired.

The men stared at each other in wonder.

"Nobody's gone," answered old Jimmy. "All th' gang's here."

Winslow was pleased.

"Bully boys!" he cried. "Now trice up your jib. Loose fores'l an' jumbo, an' pass some extra stops around th' mains'l here. Get th' boom inboard an' put th' guys on it. It ain't blowin' a zephyr outside, so get your ridin'-sail out an' bent on. We'll need some after-sail t' carry us out past th' Heads."

The gang went cheerfully about the work of getting ready for sea. They wrestled the frozen canvas out of the stops with mittened fists, cursefully declaiming the weather with lurid oaths. There was no one on the dock to see them go; in the dark of a Winter's evening they hoisted foresail, jumbo and riding-sail to the spite of the nor'wester, and streaked across the harbor, with Winslow at the wheel.

As they shot clear of the wharves, he turned for a brief instant to gaze up at the windows of his home. There was a light in the bedroom, and the young skipper knew that all he held most dear were together in the apartment.

"God keep them both," he murmured, and there was an iron ring in his voice as he sung out to the gang:

"Stand by your jumbo tail-rope! Lay aft, some of you, to th' ridin'-sail. Now then! Ha-a-rd alee!"

The schooner tacked out of the harbor in the darkness and whirling snow.

The cook's whistle shrilled out for the "first half" when the occulting flash of Lower Anchorville Head came abeam, but Winslow stopped the men as they were about to troop below for supper.

"Not yet, fellers," he said. "Stand by till we get out in the bay."

It was as well they did so, for as soon as they shot from out the lee of the land, the nor'wester hit in and the vessel rolled down until the lee rail went under.

The skipper eased her up.

"Lord, what a breeze!" he said, and he let her fall off again until the lower deadeyes of the rigging tore through the creaming lee water. It was wild driving, and when an extra hard puff hit her she rolled down until sheer-poles and half the deck disappeared from sight. The men hung on to the windward rail and rigging, while the cook, dismayed at the smashing up of all the table-gear spread for supper, clambered up the ladder and cursed sinfully.

"Holy sailor!" bawled Jimmy Thomas, standing lee wheel with the skipper. "There's some heft to this."

Winslow nodded, but there was no easing up of the iron grip which kept the wheel over.

SPRAY slashed over them in stinging sheets. The snow, driving before the gale, blinded all eyes which peered to windward and outlined the plunging schooner in ghostly whiteness. A terrible cresting sea was running. The roar of it mingled with the shriek of the wind and drowned all other sounds.

As the vessel hauled off the land, she started scooping the seas aboard and the

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men hung to the weather rigging and between the dories. It was no joke now. The wild manner in which the gallant schooner was plunging and driving, began to frighten a few of the more timid fishermen. It was unnatural, this leaping, storming swing, and every timber in the vessel seemed to twist with the shock of the combers striking on the bow.

Winslow leaned over and shouted in Thomas's ear:

"Leave th' wheel. Get th' gang—aft. Take—ridin'—sail—in."

And as old Jimmy clawed his way along the weather side of the house, the skipper eased the helm down. With canvas cracking and flapping in the wind, and the spray flying through the air like hail, the able vessel curtsied to the foam-topped surges, while a troop of streaming, oiled-up figures scrambled aft.

"Come along there!" roared Winslow as he watched the riding-sail flapping with thunderous reports. "Get her down! Some o' you to th' sheet here—— Ah! Watch out! Blazes, she's adrift!"

With the tremendous slatting of the sail, the mousing came off the hook of the lower sheet-block and it slipped out of the ring-bolt in the deck. Whirling the heavy blocks around, the riding-sail gave another cannon-like snap and, parting the tack-rope, stripped the hoops and streamed overhead, held only by the throat halyards.

"Get her in!" bawled Winslow. "Grab th' sheet, some o' you! Torment! Th' mast'll go. Jump for'ard an' slack th' foresheet! Quick! I'll run her off!"

Henderson and Burke jumped to do his bidding. The others watched the jerking masthead with fascinated eyes, while above them the ribboning riding-sail flapped and snapped like a flag.

"Sheet's started!" yelled a voice from for'ard.

Winslow swung the helm up.

"Stand by to grab that sail when it comes down!" he ordered.

And as the schooner swung off before the gale, the fractious canvas swooped into the sea alongside, while the gang snatched at it with biting oaths and hauled it aboard.

"All flapped t' ribbons, I cal'late?"

"Aye, skipper, she's purty well tattered, an' all th' hoops hev gone over th' side."

Winslow laughed.

"Well, fellers, get th' jumbo down an' tied up. We'll run under th' fores'l—she'll make better weather o' this breeze now. I had t' git her well clear o' th' land afore I swung her off. Whose wheel is it?"

"Mine, I cal'late," answered a man.

"Here you are, then. Sou'west by west. Now, you first-table crowd, let's go 'n' see what th' cook has for us. I cal'late he'll be for raisin' trouble with me for givin' her that little roll-down a while ago."

The cook was profane in his comments when the first-table gang piled down the ladder, but being cook on a fisherman, he was pretty well used to the consequences of sail-carrying in a breeze. The vessel, now running before the wind and sea, was practically on an even keel, though she did some awful fore-and-aft swooping as she topped the big Fundy seas, while the forecastle resounded with the roar of the bow-wave and the creaking of straining timbers.

The men, oblivious to everything but their supper, gulped down mugs of steaming tea and dived into the great enamel pots of stew with hearty gusto, gossiping as they ate. Idle talk is peculiar to fishermen and, as a rule, not much credit is given it; but Winslow, seated at the after end of the table, paused for a moment to listen to the shouting conversation of two or three men sitting by the pawl-post.

"AYE," one man was saying. "Fred Hanson is a proper swab. I know him, and ef I was Jim Roxton I'd cut th' heart out of him with a shack-knife. Any man what hangs around a married woman is no man at all, an' that's what Hanson is doin' all th' time."

"But Jim Roxton's woman was allus a flighty one," interposed another. "I wouldn't trust her th' length o' a gangin'. Jim warn't married to her but three months afore she was sparkin' aroun' with other men when he was to sea, an' all Cobtown knows it."

"D'ye think Roxton knows it?"

"It's hard t' say. He's fishin' out o' Gloucester with that knockabout o' his an' he don't come home very often. An awful quiet, decent feller is Jim——"

"Who's that you fellers are a scandalizin' of?" cried Winslow, laying down his mug.

A black-whiskered trawler replied:

"Dexter here was tellin' about Fred Hanson's goin's-on with Mrs. Roxton. Hanson's forever shootin' in to Cobtown t' see

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her when Roxton is away an' th' hull town is talkin' about it——"

"D'ye mean th' Roxton what is skipper o' th' *Georgie Graham*—a Gloucester knock-about?"

"Yep! that's th' feller. Married one o' them Ellis girls from Green Cove. She's a good looker, they say, but I allus h'ard she wasn't t' be trusted."

Winslow gave a grunt and his lips curled in contempt.

"Fred Hanson, eh?" he muttered grimly, and he thought of the days when he, too, had a round turn with Hanson. "Huh! th' more I hear o' that feller, th' more I'm convinced that he's a blackguard. His word ain't worth a cuss an' he's chasin' after married men's wives. Th' swab! He'll get all that's comin' to him some fine day."

And he buttoned on his oil jacket and hat and swung up on deck.

The man at the wheel greeted him anxiously.

"Skipper," said he, and in the light from the binnacle his face was worried, "she's takin' charge o' me. I can't steer her in this sea an' I'm scart I'll jibe her."

"Let your dory-mate take th' wheel, then."

"Not on your life!" came from the watch-mate standing lookout on top of the house. "I had her for about five minutes an' she's got *my* goat."

Winslow laughed.

"Hand her over, Anson. I'll relieve you. Go down for'ard an' git your supper."

Under the foresail the schooner stormed through the night while the wind howled in the halyards and rigging of the canvas-denuded mainmast, and spray and snow made the deluged decks an inferno of wintry spite. The wind seemed to be increasing. With the turn of the tide at midnight there would be a raging inferno on the waters—the whirling maelstrom of wind-and-tide-whipped sea peculiar to the Bay of Fundy.

Winslow knew it, but as he strained at the wheel of the plunging schooner he allowed his thoughts to wander to the neat little cottage overlooking Anchorville Bay.

"Her an' th' boy'll be asleep now, I cal'late. Lord Harry, but he's a boy! Th' wee blue eyes of him—clear as a Summer sky! An' th' strength of him! Gosh, I kin feel th' grip o' them little fists o' his aroun' my finger yet. An' t' see him sleepin' curled up in them woolly blankets! 'Tis jest a picture—yes! Jest like what ye see in them ladies' magazines th' wife gets."

The vessel drove her bowsprit into a comber and the windlass disappeared. Winslow spoked the wheel over as the sea roared aft and creamed around his boot-tops.

"Aha!" he muttered. "Tide's turnin'."

And continuing his previous thoughts he crooned a song and thought of home, of the joy and peacefulness of it all. When his mind wandered to Hanson and Roxton's wife, he gripped the spokes as if he were gripping the throat of the man who was wrecking probably just such a home as his.

IV

BOTH gangs, fore and aft, were lounging below, oiled up and ready for a call. The *Isabel Winslow* was bucking the tide-rips. Overhead the decks resounded with the thunder of boarding seas, while through the ventilator, skylight and half-opened slides poured streams of chilly brine. Winslow was steering, lashed to the wheel, while on the house the two dory-mates whose watch it was clung with arms passed through the stops of the furled mainsail.

"Wa-a-tch out!" yelled one of the men.

The vessel poised on a crest, then dived into a black wall of roaring surge which buried her clean to the tops of the nested dories. Thundering aft it came, and the skipper clung to the spokes while the sea plucked at his body and tried to drag him over the taffrail.

"Scott!" he cried when the water sluiced off. "That one was a brute. Get the gang up, Dexter, and reef that fores'l. She's down by th' head."

The men turned out, nerved for action. Winslow roared his commands.

"Ye'll have t' reef her runnin'. I ain't a goin' t' risk bringin' her to, an' I doubt ef she'd come anyway. Slack away on your halyards until ye get th' reef-band well down an' some o' you tail on to that gaff-downhaul. Look out she don't jibe, but I'll watch her all I can."

He remained aft at the wheel, easing the vessel by every trick of steering he knew. Anxiously straining his eyes into the darkness ahead, he tried to make out what the gang were doing. Another sea came aboard.

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The foresail gave a thunderous flap and fetched up with a shock on the jibing gear; and when the water streamed over the quarter, Winslow listened with his heart in his mouth for the ominous hail of "Man overboard!"

It did not come, however. As to his ears there came snatches of lurid Bank cursing, he knew that all was well. Swearing helped a lot that night. In spite of the fact that all of the panting, perspiring men struggling with the reef-ear-ring of a sheet-iron double-ought foresail full of wind, were in immediate danger of instant precipitation before their Maker, their language abated not a whit in vigor and intensity.

"Up she goes!" came the chorus from for'ard, and sluiced in spray, the gang swayed up throat, peak and jigs.

Jimmy Thomas clawed his way aft.

"All serene-o, skipper!" he bawled.

Winslow nodded.

"Take th' wheel, Jimmy. I'm a goin' t' shoot her in through th' Gull Island Passage an' git out o' this howlin' drink."

Hoisting himself on the main sheer-pole, he scanned the blackness to port.

"H'm," he muttered as the vessel rose on a sea. "One, two, three, four—one, two, three, four, five. Four flashes and an interval of five seconds. That's Gull Island." Scrambling aft he shouted:

"Stand by to jibe your fores'l. Git th' tackle on an' let her go easy! Ready? Let her come, Jimmy!"

Crash! the short boom went over, and the vessel swung in for the land.

In twenty minutes they had stormed through the passage and were gliding along in comparatively smooth water. It was two in the morning, but none of the men had turned in. They were in the act of casting off their oilskins, when the skipper roused them out again. Anathematizing the luck that sent a man Winter-fishing, they climbed on deck.

"Reef th' mains'l an' set it. Give her th' jumbo when you're ready."

When the extra sail had been hoisted, they stood up and down the bay in the lee of the land.

ABOUT four o'clock the snow ceased and the sky cleared. Overhead the stars blinked with the frosty shine of a Winter's night. When Winslow came on deck after a short nap, the lookout pointed with a mittened hand to the port light of a vessel on their weather quarter.

"That feller hez bin splittin' tacks with us fur th' last hour'n a half."

"Who is he?" inquired the skipper with a show of interest. "Ain't Hanson's *Minnehaha*, is it?"

"No," answered the man. "It ain't any of our fleet—neither Anchorville or Cobtown. She's a lump of a vessel—knockabout, I think."

"Hum."

The skipper bestowed a casual glance upon the vessel to windward.

"Some o' them Maine haddockers from Sou'west Harbor or Vinal Haven, I cal'late. Huggin' th' land for shelter." He whistled a music-hall ditty as he glanced at the sky.

"Clearin' up," he remarked. "Get a good shoot down to Brown's if th' wind don't chop aroun'—— Why, that joker's an auxiliary! What's he got his engine a goin' for?"

The putt-putt of a gasoline engine came stuttering over the water from the knockabout, and as they watched her, the two sidelights showed.

"Where's he a goin'?" queried the helmsman. "He's bearin' down on our quarter."

"Wants t' speak us, maybe. Hold her as she is."

They watched the other vessel looming nearer; watched her come within a cable's length, and then the side-lights vanished.

"Well, what d'ye make o' that?" cried the lookout. "He's doused his lights——"

"By th' Lord Harry!" cried the skipper in astonishment. "He's comin' right slap for us—— Hi-i-o! you crazy loon! Sheer off or you'll ram us."

The staccato exhaust of the motor was plainer now. The mystified watchers on the *Isabel Winslow* could see the ghostly loom of the other craft's sails close aboard. There was no doubt of the intention, unless the crowd on the knockabout were playing some foolish practical joke.

"Up with th' helm," yelled Winslow as he jumped to the main-sheet.

The booms swept over and fetched up on the jibing gear with a terrific crash—it was still blowing hard—as the other vessel surged past their stern.

"You crazy swab!" roared Winslow, shaking his fist at the lonely figure at the knockabout's wheel. "I'll knock the stuff-

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in' out of you if you try that stunt again."

Round swept the knockabout with the crash and shock of jibing booms, and with engine going she came for the *Winslow* again.

"Well, what d'ye know about that?" ejaculated the skipper. "That feller's gone crazy, an' means t' sink us! Call th' gang——"

But there was no need to call them. The shock of the jibing booms had fetched them out all standing. They piled on deck with a rush, gasping in astonishment.

"Douse all the lights!" cried Winslow. "Gimme th' wheel, you!"

He grasped the spokes and watched the other vessel bearing down on them again.

"To th' main- an' fore-sheets there. Stand by your jumbo."

While the gang scattered to stations, he watched the auxiliary with fascinated eyes. Both vessels were rushing through the water at a fair clip, but the knockabout with her engine going could sail two feet to the *Isabel Winslow's* one, besides being able to maneuver quickly independent of the wind. Down she stormed with the white water creaming from under her bows and driving ahead to strike the fleeing schooner dead amidships.

The perspiration poured from Winslow's face as he saw the pursuer relentlessly swooping down.

"Main-sheet!" he roared as he ground the helm up. "Slack away fore and aft!"

Crash! the main-boom flew across the deck. As it fetched up on the sheet, the mainmast wavered for an instant and thundered down, splitered the rail into matchwood and, thumping and grinding alongside, threatened to stave in the whole quarter.

The knockabout had swashed past and was rounding up to leeward, while the *Winslow's* gang screamed incoherent curses at her and waited for the next move. Winslow was taken completely aback. He expected to wake up and find it all a disagreeable dream. For a vessel deliberately to try to ram another! Pah! It was unheard of! He rubbed his eyes to see if he were awake.

The mainmast with the mainsail and booms was still over the side grinding and banging in the seaway, while the knockabout came up under their lee quarter.

"Hey there, Hanson!" came a voice across the heaving surge. "I ain't through with ye yet——"

"Hanson? Hanson?" ejaculated Winslow dully. "Can that be——"

"By th' ol' flamin' blazes!" cried Jimmy Thomas. "That's Jim Roxton an' th' *Georgie Graham!*"

The knockabout was returning to the charge. As it sped past the *Winslow's* stern to deliver a drive from windward, the men yelled:

"Hey, Jim Roxton! This ain't Hanson—*Isabel—Winslow!*"

AS THEY shouted the name, the other craft came into the wind and lay rolling in the swell with engine stopped. The figure at her wheel shoved back the cabin slide. Men poured forth on her decks.

"Hi-i!" roared a voice. "Skipper's gone crazy!"

"Stand by us till daylight!" cried Winslow, and an affirmative chorus came back from the other vessel.

Heaving the vessel to the wind under foresail, they got torches alight, and in the glare of them cut the wreckage clear of the side. The mainsail and gaff were hauled aboard. The boom and the remains of the mainmast were made fast to a stout rope and veered out astern.

"Th' spring-stay must ha' been strained when th' ridin'-sail went last night," said the skipper when the work was done. "Th' stick 'ud never ha' jumped otherwise. Now, launch a dory, some of you, an' pull me over to that cussed tub t' wind'ard."

A big red-faced man met them as they tumbled over the knockabout's lee rail.

"Cap'en Winslow, eh? Too bad about this night's work. Cal'late our skipper's gone loony. Comes on deck last night after startin' up the engine, an' he locks th' hull gang of us in th' cabin an' foc'sle. We c'd hear him swearin' away at ye, thinkin' ye was this feller Hanson what has been monkeyin' aroun' with his wife—— Yes, he h'ard about it in Sou'west Harbor——"

"Why didn't ye stop the engine?" inquired Winslow.

"So we did," hastily replied the man, "but we didn't think about that at first. D'ye want t' see th' skipper? He's in his berth——"

"Yes, I'll go an' see him," growled the other. "I'd like t' wring his infernal neck

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for th' time he's given me with his goings-on."

Winslow's rage vanished when he entered the cabin, and through the open door of the stateroom saw the haggard face of Roxton. He was sitting on his sea-chest with his elbows on his knees and his hands clasping his head. The men loafing around in the cabin respectfully drew away when Winslow entered.

"I suppose you've come over to have it out with me?" said Roxton harshly. "I don't blame you, but it was a mistake—a mistake, and I'm sorry."

The young skipper stepped into the berth and laid his hand upon the other man's shoulder.

"No, old man, I ain't a goin' t' say a word, for I take it ye didn't know what ye were doin'. Cheer up; things ain't so bad when daylight comes an' th' sun is shinin'."

Roxton looked up.

"You know—— of course you know! Everybody knows. Th' swine! I'll kill him an' her too!" He gritted his teeth.

"I made a mistake," he continued more calmly. "I was up to th' signal station on Gull Island thar an' th' keeper told me that Fred Hanson had come up through th' Passage last night, but th' no'wester druv him back. I didn't cal'late that there'd be any other vessel but his aroun' here in sich weather, so when I met you standin' up an' down th' Bay, I took you for Hanson's semi-knockabout—ye're both of a build—an' I was out t' git him. I'm sorry for what I've done, but if that feller was out thar now I'd chase him clean t' Georges for th' pleasure o' drivin' my vessel's bows into his! I'll cut him down to his boot-straps——"

"Sh!" cautioned Winslow. "Brace up, man! I want ye t' give me a tow into Cobtown, an' we'll say nawthin' about this day's work. Ye shouldn't fret about things. Come on—get under way an' I'll pass ye a line. 'Tis only a forty-mile pluck."

Captain Roxton shook Winslow's hand. Getting a grip upon his feelings, he took command again.

Back on the *Isabel Winslow* they roused the fishing-hawser over the bows, and the *Georgie Graham*, with engine chugging and sails full to the wintry breeze, dragged the partly dismasted fisherman along the coast.

Winslow paced the quarter thinking of many things. Fishing was not to be thought of with a new mainmast to get. He pictured Clarence Dickey's chagrin when he heard the news of the accident. It was hard—very hard—but whose fault was it? As he turned the problem over in his mind, he came to the root of things.

"Humph!" he muttered grimly. "I think I kin chalk this up to Hanson's account."

V

IT WAS a hard drag into Cobtown, but at nightfall they lurched in past the lighthouse and into the harbor. There were a number of fishermen lying to anchor off the channel—storm-bound, waiting for a chance to shoot outside for a day's fishing. The *Georgie Graham* dragged her charge well into the harbor before both came to an anchor.

Winslow had just gone below to change his clothes for going ashore, when the skipper of the knockabout clattered down the companion. There was a tense look on his face as he picked his way among the trawlers lounging around the stove over to Winslow's stateroom.

"Slide th' door, Cap'en," he said, and Winslow, wondering, acceded.

"He's in here," rasped Roxton. 'Lyin' above us."

"Who? Hanson?"

"Aye, Hanson!"

His face reflected the intensity of his emotions as he mentioned the hated name.

"What are ye goin' t' do?" whispered Winslow. "Keep a grip on yerself an' don't do anything rash."

The other smiled grimly.

"Don't worry, Winslow," he said. "I've thought it all over. I'll keep *her* well under my lee in future, but I'm goin' t' dress *him* down afore we're much older. D'ye suppose he's aboard his vessel?"

"I can't say."

The other nodded.

"Well, I'll take a chance, but I want ye t' come over with me. I want ye t' stand by. Will ye come?"

Winslow hesitated. He did not care to mix into an affair like this, but as he thought it over his scruples vanished. Yes, he would go.

A few minutes later, both skippers leaped over the *Minnehaha's* rail. There was a light in the cabin. Roxton peered under the companion.

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"He's there," he muttered grimly. Down the ladder both men clattered.

Hanson was in the act of shaving when they entered. At the sight of Roxton's grim face appearing in the cabin mirror, he dropped the razor to the floor. There were three other men in the cabin. On recognizing the visitors they discreetly went on deck.

"Draw th' slide, boys," said Roxton as they climbed the ladder. He turned and faced the man before him.

"Well, Hanson," rasped the *Georgie Graham's* skipper, as, stern-eyed and grim, he surveyed the fat, swarthy face of the man he was addressing. "Sprucin' up, eh? Goin' ashore t' see her, eh? Havin' a deuce of a time when I'm to sea?"

The other's dark face flushed. In his trepidation he wiped the lather off his half-shaven chin.

"I—I—don't know what you're a drivin' at," he stuttered, avoiding Roxton's steely gaze and fingering the soap-brush nervously.

Roxton laughed. It was not a nice laugh to listen to. Winslow stood by the gangway inwardly wishing he were anywhere else.

"You don't know!" sneered Roxton after an awkward pause. "Well, I cal'late *I* know, an' you an' me'll have it out afore we leave this cabin. *You* don't know! Why every trawler aroun' th' coast hez bin makin' foc'sle-talk o' your name an' hers. Pretty thing for a man t' hear all Glo'ster a scandalizin' his wife. Eh? You sweep!"

Hanson fidgeted uneasily but said nothing, while the other continued:

"Now, my bucko, you're agoin' t' have it out with Mary Roxton's husband. Stand out, you skunk!"

Stepping forward he fetched Hanson a blow in the face with his shut fist.

"You struck me!" sputtered Hanson, leaping at his assailant, his black eyes burning with rage.

"Yes!" hissed Roxton, "an' I'll strike ye a good many times afore I'm through!"

Smack! His left caught Hanson on the jaw and knocked him against the bulkhead.

THE details are brutal. Even Winslow, calmly looking on, shuddered at the primitive savagery which seemed to possess the wronged fisherman. He was relentless and powerful; after he had broken down Hanson's fistic opposition, he smashed the other with unmerciful hands. Outside, all was silent. In the cabin the two men panted and fought in the feeble light from the binnacle-lamp. Around and around the stove they went; Hanson whining and retiring, and Roxton advancing, savage and vengeful. He never allowed his victim a breathing-moment, but drove and smashed until Hanson's face streamed blood and the very fat seemed to ooze out on his skin.

"You dog! You swab! You squirmin' rat!" Every invective meant a blow.

Hanson's breath was coming in hoarse gasps. He staggered around the room. Two or three times he cast around for a means of escape, but Winslow barred the only exit. Realizing that he was trapped he collapsed, breathing heavily, upon a locker, while Roxton stood over him with a saturnine smile.

"Think I'm through with ye?" drawled the other with hideous irony in his voice. "Think I'll let ye alone? No! I'll make ye lick th' gurry off'n my boots afore I leave ye! Get down an' do it, you bloody-eyed fly-by-night! Down an' lick my boots, you whinin' dog!"

He smashed Hanson in the face again.

"Are ye goin' t' beg my pardon? No?"

Another sickening blow.

"Beg my pardon!"

The voice was as harsh as the grate of a file. The fist was drawn back for another drive at the niddered, whimpering heap of humanity cowering on the locker. Smack! the fist shot out. Hanson fell back.

"Knocked out!"

Roxton laughed grimly.

"I'll fetch him around."

He reached for a dory-jar and emptied the contents over his victim's bruised and bloody face.

"Hadn't ye better let him be?" cried Winslow. "Ye've given him enough——"

The other showed his teeth in a fierce smile.

"Oh, I won't kill him, Cap'en, but I ain't through with him yet. This is the only joy I've known for days—aye, weeks—an' I c'd set to now an' beat that face o' his-n to a pulp. He's comin' 'round."

Hanson raised himself slowly, while the other drew back his fist and repeated the insistent demand.

"Beg my pardon!"

"I beg your pardon!" muttered the panting heap squatting on the seat.

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"Down on your knees an' say it!"

The *Minnehaha's* skipper hesitated. Roxton's fist smashed him again.

"Down on your knees!"

Crying like a child, the swarthy, cocksure, debonair Fred Hanson—devil of a fellow and all as he was—flopped to his knees and repeated the apology under the most degrading of all conditions.

"Now, then," said Roxton after his opponent had thrown himself on the locker. "That's you scored off my list. I'll cut a good stick on my way home an' settle up with the other one. She'll be a good, honest woman after I've done with her. Come on, Winslow, let's leave this spineless dog. He couldn't carry guts to a bear."

WINSLOW turned to leave with a sigh of relief, when Hanson called them back. His features were swollen and streaked with blood. His shirt was hanging in rags on his shoulders.

"I've been punished," he said humbly. "I've paid for all I ever done, but I'll ask ye one favor—just one little favor——"

"What is it?" snarled Roxton.

"Don't say anythin' about this thing——"

"Huh!" snapped the other. "I'll tell everybody I meet what a son of a dog you are an' how I beat ol' blazes out of ye——"

Hanson stretched out his hands.

"Winslow!" he said. "You ain't got nawthin' against me. Take my part an' keep this thing quiet—I've never harmed you!"

The young skipper drew back.

"Th' deuce you haven't!" he cried. "Why, consarn ye, I wouldn't be here now ef it warn't for you. Lord save me! I feel like hammerin' ye myself for th' scurvy trick you played Clarence Dickey.

"I had t' leave for sea in a gale o' wind an' lost my mainm'st 'count o' you—you an' yer dodgin', oily ways. How about th' contract ye signed with Clarence for yer fish? Breakin' it, ain't ye? Sellin' to th' Bay Shore people for a quarter-cent more, an' turnin' down a man what has always treated you square! I tell you what I'll do——"

Hanson looked up hopefully.

"What?"

"You jest get your hook up with th' next tide for Anchorville an' run that fish to Clarence Dickey an' we'll say nawthin' about this night's work; but refuse an' I'll make it my business to queer you with every fisherman that ever hauled trawls on th' Eastern Banks. I'll tell 'em that ye ain't got th' sand of a man, ner th' soul of a man, an' I'll git Cap'en Roxton t' back me up. What are ye goin' t' do?"

"I'll stand out with th' next tide for Anchorville, an' Dickey'll get my trip."

They left him with a mutual feeling of relief.

CLARENCE DICKEY does not know, even to this day, how he got the *Minnehaha's* trip of fish. Nevertheless he was overjoyed to get it, especially when he heard that the *Isabel Winslow* had lost her mainmast in a gale and had to be towed into Cobtown to procure a new one. It must have been a season of violent weather on the water, for the *Minnehaha's* skipper came in with his face bruised through being knocked down by a sea. Fishermen spun queer yarns about a Captain Roxton and a fight, but fishermen's gossip is taken witha grain of salt.

Harry Winslow, skipper of the *Isabel Winslow*, jogging to dories on a fine Winter's day on Brown's, could have said many things. But he had broken into a domestic tragedy and preferred keeping what he knew to himself.

"It was savage," he would murmur as he twirled the wheel, "but I really believe—yes, I am certain—I would ha' done th' same myself. I wonder how Roxton and his wife are gettin' along?"

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A GENTLEMAN FROM THE SEA

BY

Stephen Chalmers

CHAPTER I

old man. "They're comin' again. Happen this time."

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but five feet high and for exercise the buccaneers had had to chase one another around on all fours.

As Harry Satan was pinioned by the negro and led toward the beam and ladder, scattered groups of people came hurrying from the town. Like Third Grog, they had been awakened by the tramp of the squad and they knew what it portended.

Harry Satan, as became a good buccaneer, showed little concern. To his less unfortunate companions in the cages he cried:

"Give us a catch, boys. 'Twill hearten a man."

The caged buccaneers greeted this with a cheer. It pleased them to note Harry's spirit, especially as the Turk had disgraced them on the previous day by showing the white feather. Their view of the hanging was rather spoiled by the intervening and ever-growing crowd, but they struck up an old sea-song and bawled the more lustily so that Harry Satan would be cheered to the last.

"Here we be, poor sailor-men,
Newlie come from over the se-e-e-eas.
We spend our lives in miseree,
While others lives at e-e-e-ease.

"Shall we go dance around, around, around?
Shall we go dance around, around, around?
And he that is a bully boy,
Come pledge me on this ground, aground,
aground!"

The last note jumped up a whole octave and trailed out in a half-comic, half-tragic howl. And it was just on that note that Harry Satan lost his footing on the ladder and joined the bearded Turk in the swaying chains.

In spite of their philosophy—it was not bravado—the buccaneers felt depressed when the soldiers and the crowd departed and they had an unobstructed view of their two late companions, who seemed to be mouthing at one another as they mincingly trod on nothing.

"And this," said Third Grog savagely, "is what we get for sarvin' Harry Morgan as faithful as dogs!"

"Therefore a dog's reward," said Grog's Boy with a careless laugh.

"Aye, aye," said Tom Swagger from the next cage, "but where be Harry Morgan hisself—hey? I'll wager he thinks no more of our necks than he does of his own—his own bein' in no danger of stretchin'. I tell ye, mates, 'tis Morgan is a hanging of us so our tongues'll be too stiff to talk."

The buccaneers in the next cage winked at one another. A suspicion was in their minds, too, but it was safer to listen than talk.

"Aye, aye, lads," continued Tom Swagger. "I be no wise man, but neither was I born Fool's Day. When that King's ship was laying for us in the cove south o' Chagres to arrest Harry Morgan and us and confiscate the loot o' Panama, I sees the play at once.

" 'Tom Swagger,' says I to myself, 'Harry Morgan foresaw all this from the beginning when he planned the raid on Panama. Harry Morgan has friends aback o' him,' says I, 'an' it was never meant the boys should get a smell o' that treasure.' "

"Happen ye be right, Tom," said Third Grog with a chuckle, "but Harry Morgan be a prisoner, too, at Sant' Jago."

"Bah!" shouted Swagger. " 'Tain't in the plan that he be hanged, no more 'n the Governor, or the somebody that were back o' him."

"Happen ye think it be the King, Tom?" whispered Third Grog, his ear close to the partition to catch the answer.

But Tom Swagger did not commit himself further. The sentry had halted and seemed to be listening.

"All I knows or cares about now," growled the talkative buccaneer, "is that we've been fooled like country churls at a game of fast-and-loose. Dead men tell no tales, says Morgan, an' we as knows his secret must swing for it."

"Silence in the cages!" snapped the sentry, stiffening up and shouldering his musket as he resumed his merciless parade.

The three buccaneers cursed him roundly, although with the utmost good nature. They had nothing against the sentry, who had his own troubles, tramping up and down under a tropic sun on a roasting sand-spit, clad in a heavy steel breastplate and shouldering a fifteen-pound blunderbuss.

Third Grog chuckled and filled a wooden pipe from a little canvas bag full of chopped tobacco-weed. When he had puffed smoke a while he passed the pipe to Grog's Boy. The splendid young buccaneer with the blue eyes and nut-brown curls, who would have graced velvet and lace as well as he did leather breeches and doublet, took a few whiffs and passed the pipe around the bars to Tom Swagger in the next cage.

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"Smoke, Tom Swagger," said he. "Ye'll not fancy it as well to-morrow."

"Burn yer eyes!" growled Swagger, taking the pipe.

By and by a breeze blew in from the sea. The sun blazed mercilessly. Flies sought the shelter of the cages and tortured the buccaneers incessantly. Miniature sandstorms whirled around them and the gibbet-chains jangled as they swayed in the wind.

AFTER the noon had passed, groups of morbid sightseers came out from the town to stare up at the swinging buccaneers, and to make fun of the three remaining in the cages. They fed hog-plums and cashew nuts to them through the cage-bars, as if to wild beasts. But the buccaneers were good natured and gave as good sarcasm as they got. Third Grog told stories for tobacco. After one sample tale of derring-do on the Spanish Main the tobacco was forthcoming before a second tale was begun.

While Third Grog bartered and Tom Swagger flirted through the bars with a sweetheart of the days when buccaneers were princes in Port Royal, the handsome lad, Grog's Boy, slept peacefully with his head up against a corner where the grating met the partition.

A half-breed Spaniard who attempted to reach the sleeper's ear with a buzzard's feather, was suddenly repulsed by a lovely little fury whose raiment consisted of a short skirt and a *serape*. She also had a long, thin knife which she bared between Grog's Boy and his would-be torturer.

At her shrill, furious protest Grog's Boy awoke and recognized Chiquita, a nameless daughter of an Arawak woman and a Spaniard. She had the features of her father's race and the swarthiness of her mother's. Men accounted her beautiful, if nothing else.

"*Hola*, sweetheart!" hailed Grog's Boy.

"*Ah, carito!*" cooed the Indio-Spanish girl, her fury vanishing like an April cloud before Spring sunshine. The half-breed laughed, shrugged his shoulders and went away to look at the corpses.

The girl slipped her hands through the bars and Grog's Boy, unabashed before numbers, took them in his. The pair spent an hour in intimate whispering. By and by the other sightseers melted away, perhaps in that sympathy for lovers which is common to all human hearts, the best and the worst. Then the girl began to talk rapidly.

"The chief *boucanier*," she whispered, "Señor 'Arry Morgan, he be at Sant' Jago with the grandees. He no prisoner. Why is it, Groggy's Boy? Chiquita no *sabe* that. I hear soldier man say at sun-go-down this day they come hang thees *boucanier* who have ring in his nose."

Swagger's fancy was a gold ring in his nose. Swagger was doomed.

"Chiquita no hear soldier-man say any talk about Groggy's Boy and old Tobacco Man, but after *boucanier* with ring in his nose, no you maybe to-morrow?"

"Never mind that now, *Pepita*," said Grog's Boy, his eyes aglow upon the girl's dark orbs. "Come close to the bars, lass, so I may buss ye. This day for love; to-morrow for the hanging. Tell me again you love me, *cartssima*."

"Ah, Boy! Ah, *carito!*" she said.

Her bosom heaved and her eyes filled with tears.

"Chiquita's heart break into many pieces. Chiquita love plenty-plenty men, but never love so sweet before. An' she never love again when Groggy's Boy is hang."

Grog's Boy was amused, for he knew something of the history of Chiquita of the Plaza. Yet he was also touched mysteriously, for he had never known the pathos of loving. He stroked her hands gently and looked wonderingly into her deep, moist, black eyes. Suddenly their sheen changed and she blazed with fury.

"No, no!" she hissed. "They no hang you! They no hang you! I go keel Bem-Bem, the black, who do the hanging. I go keel——"

"Stand back from the cages!" commanded the sentry sternly, although his eyes roved admiringly over the girl's lissome figure.

Chiquita made a comical little mouth at the soldier and rolled her eyes upon him. They were wonderful eyes. The soldier laughed and said:

"Be quick then. Ye ha' whispered long enough."

"I could make fool of him," mused Chiquita as the sentry moved on, "but I know better way." She narrowed her eyes and looked at Grog's Boy's shoulder. Then, still avoiding his gaze, she whispered:

"Not he guard at night. 'Nother soldier man at night. Chiquita know him. He love me. Chiquita one time love him.

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Now me fool him. Make think Chiquita love him again."

She suddenly plucked her little brown hands from Grog's Boy and darted away into the brush, which came to within one hundred feet of the rear of the cages. The sentry halted to look after her. A fine wench, that. He wished his duty was the night-watch. 'Twas cooler, and one could smoke the weed and suck a flask of wine, and with a girl like that——

Later, he had reason to prefer the day-watch, after all.

AT SUNSET a crowd came out from the town with the priest, the black executioners and the same squad of soldiers. There was to be another hanging, and the turn was Tom Swagger's.

"Shall we pipe ye a catch, Tom?" asked Third Grog, solicitously.

"Ay, matey," said the victim-elect. "But, if ye love me, let it be a cheerier catch than Harry Satan's. My fancy's for 'Hanging Johnny' as we sung on the march from Cruces. Heave away, lads!"

And so Tom went to the gallows, while the two buccaneers who survived him lifted their voices in a chantey which may, or may not, have been appropriate:

They call me Hanging Johnny.
Away-ay-oh!
They call me Hanging Johnny,
So hang, boys, hang!

Even after Tom Swagger was cold and the hangman and the people had gone away and night fell upon Gallows Point, the two buccaneers, one so old and one so young, kept up their singing. It was more to comfort themselves than in any spirit of bravado.

A rope, a beam, a ladder,
Away-ay-oh!
A rope, a beam, a ladder,
So hang, boys, hang.

By and by the sentry begged them to have done.

"I'm no white-liver," said he, "but it do make my flesh creep to hear that hangin' catch with them three a dancin' up against the stars. Have done, like good lads, and get ye to sleep."

"Aye, aye," said Third Grog to his young companion, "we'd best save our breath for the morrow."

The old rogue was presently snoring. Grog's Boy lay down and pretended to sleep. His head was pillowed on his right arm, but his eyes, wide open, followed the movements of the sentry, or scanned the brush.

Two hours passed thus. The only sounds were the trill of the night creatures, the lapping of the lagoon, the hum of the surf on the seaward side of the sandspit and the uproar of night-life in Port Royal.

Suddenly a lithe figure darted from the brush and almost fell into the sentry's arms.

"Chiquita!" he cried, and she seemed to meet him more than half way in a long, rapt kiss. But then she looked up and shuddered.

"Ah, the dead men! What a place for love!"

She drew herself from the soldier's embrace and backed toward the brush. The sentry quickly satisfied himself that his charges were asleep and followed the wild girl. As she gradually drew him further into the gloom of the undergrowth, Grog's Boy chuckled.

"Trust a maid to know her trade," quoth he.

A little while passed. Then came a faint cry and a rustling in the bushes. Almost immediately the girl reappeared—alone. She carried the soldier's musket and came straight toward the cage.

Without a word she placed the muzzle of the weapon to the lock of the cage door and pulled the trigger. There came a loud explosion. The lock was blown to pieces, the recoil of the gun almost throwing the girl off her feet.

"Quick!" said she, pulling out the iron bar and swinging open the entrance. "They hear gun. You must come quick! Hurry! Hurry."

Third Grog was naturally wide-awake and he and Grog's Boy did not waste time or words. The girl led them at a rapid pace to a clump of bushes not thirty rods from the gibbets and by the lagoon's edge. Here she discovered to them a rough canoe dug out of *ceiba* wood.

"What of the sentry?" asked Grog's Boy as they piled in and pushed off into the lagoon.

Chiquita chirruped and shrugged her shoulders.

"I keel him, she said simply.

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CHAPTER II

IN THE MANGROVE SWAMP

IT WAS Chiquita who wielded the paddle, and she did it with a native ease and knack that sent the canoe at remarkable speed through the phosphorescent calm of the lagoon waters.

But the canoe was badly trimmed, borne down at the head by the weight of Third Grog and his largely developed young companion, as against the comparative featherweight of the girl in the stern. In a short time even Chiquita's practised arms felt the strain of ill balance. Her breath began to come quick and sharp.

Grog's Boy, facing the receding sandspit from the middle seat, could see that the alarm had been raised. Lights, moving swiftly out from the town and in the direction of the cages, flashed upon the steel breastplates of those who carried them.

"They see us!" said the young buccaneer as a vicious spit of fire clove the night. A second later came the report of the musket and a bullet zipped into the lagoon to the right, cutting into the flaming depths like a miniature comet.

"Give me the paddle!" Grog's Boy commanded.

The girl obeyed and changed seats with the powerful young buccaneer.

New strength and better balance added to their speed. The soldiers were putting off a boat from the beach at Port Royal, but the passage between the sandspit and the mainland on the inner side of the lagoon was narrow. Already the fugitives were within two hundred yards of the ferry landing, where the road from St. Jago terminated at the Ferry Inn.

Lights burned brightly in the inn, which at one time had been a resort of roistering buccaneers; but in these evil days buccaneers were growing scarce and the inn was now crowded with soldiers from the Passage Fort, further up the road.

Grog's Boy had forgotten the changed times in the excitement of the hour. It was Chiquita who suddenly warned him.

"No there, Boy! No there!" she whispered.

"Then—where the deuce?" panted Grog's Boy. "There's nothing but mangrove swamp for miles either side of the road!"

"We must go into swamp. They no follow there. Too much fever—alligator—mosquito. You paddle, Groggy's Boy. Me guide."

Zip!—Bang!

They had paused while they argued and the oncoming pursuers fired again.

Grog's Boy shoved the paddle deep and drove the canoe forward in the direction of the black wall of mangroves that rose out of the deep waters of the lagoon. There seemed no inlet in that dark mass of rank growth and there was certainly no footing, for the roots of the semi-aquatic trees were fathoms below.

"Keep on. Me guide," whispered Chiquita. "Me know place."

"Boy!" said Third Grog from the bow, "Run her along in the shadow. Hug the mangroves. Happen they may lose us there."

It was good advice, for the shadow was as thick as mud between the star-mirroring lagoon and the spangled skies above the mangrove tops. In a minute the canoe was darting along that belt of gloom close under the sinister, ill-smelling tangle.

The pursuers—a boatload of soldiers with four lusty rowers—were close behind; but like a hound at flowing water they lost the scent at that belt of blackness. This the fugitives knew when bullets began to fly wild, evidently fired at random.

"We win!" said Third Grog suddenly. "Here's to loot, an' burn their souls! They're landin' at the inn."

Chiquita suddenly laid a hand upon Grog's Boy's knee and pointed into the mangroves.

"In there!" she said.

GROG'S BOY obeyed, although neither he nor Third Grog could see any sign of an opening, save that there was a break in the mangrove-tops against the stars. Nevertheless, as he drove the canoe where Chiquita pointed, its prow encountered no obstacle.

The mangroves closed in on both sides. The air became hot and fetid with the breath of miasma. The night shrilled with horrible croakings and whirrings and only the clear belt of starry sky overhead offset the sense of being plunged suddenly into some fearsome hell.

Apparently the canoe was winding along a river, or some inlet of the lagoon. It was by the corresponding lines of the overhead

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sky-lane that Chiquita directed the course.

None spoke save Third Grog, and he merely grumbled. The place was depressing. For ten minutes they slipped quietly along this inky passage. Then the bow of the canoe struck with a dull thud.

The thought of a drifting log no sooner entered their minds than it was dispelled. The "log" suddenly came to life and turned a complete somersault. As it dived to the slimy bottom a great tail swept the air like a flail and struck the water with terrific force, after grazing the dugout.

"Alligator," said Chiquita. "Him sleep on top water. Canoe bump him—wake him up."

She laughed softly while Third Grog and Grog's Boy stared at the black water. The bold buccaneers shivered to think of providing a meal for a jagged-fanged monster down there in the slime.

Again Grog's Boy pushed the canoe ahead, but this time more gently. At Chiquita's command Third Grog in the bow drummed on the gunwale with his fists in order to alarm any floating alligators ahead, so that they would sink of their own volition instead of being bumped to raging wakefulness.

Gradually the river among the mangroves narrowed, or rather the mangroves closed in on either side. The passage became shallower and sometimes the canoe was worked over mudbars by sheer paddle-strength. Finally the mangroves completely blocked further progress in the canoe, which drove its nose into mud and stuck fast.

"Now we get out," whispered Chiquita, and strangely enough the human whisper was startlingly distinct despite the uproar of lizards, toads and crickets. "Now we go through swamp."

"Happen we'll sink," said Third Grog from the bow.

"*St, st*—ground soft," was the reply. "But Chiquita know well. Walk good and hold tight to mangrove, so no too much weight on foot. A little way we come strong place and soon-soon come to *salina* and hard sand."

"Heave-o!" said the Grog's Boy, shipping his paddle.

"Burn me, but y'are a wise lass," said Third Grog, "an' as for me, beggars can't be choosers, for if ye didn't fancy the Boy I'd ha' swung the morrow. Do we abandon the craft?"

"Better must," said Chiquita quaintly. "They no come to-night. Soldier man frightened for mangrove swamp—"

"Hang me if I blame 'em!" muttered the old baccaneer.

"But they come by boat this way at morning, an' maybe soldier man come into *salina* from Passage Fort—look find us. But they never find Chiquita in mangrove swamp or *salina*. Chiquita know too well."

They abandoned the canoe and, with the Indian-Spanish girl leading, they pushed into the swamp. But for the mangrove branches upon which they hung their weight, passing hand over hand through the thick growth, the soft ground must have engulfed them many a time. As it was, they stepped quickly, withdrawing each leg before the mud reached higher than the knee.

It was exhausting work. Third Grog blew and cursed and said the swamps by the Rio Chagres were fields o' daisies alongside o' this alligators' den. Grog's Boy said little. He toiled along close behind the girl, his muscles aching, his back breaking and his whole body streaming perspiration.

He wondered how this wisp of a woman stood the ordeal; but beyond a slight panting she betrayed no sign of distress. Indeed, her thoughts seemed to be upon hardship only as it concerned the safety of the young buccaneer whose blue eyes, cavalier curls and broad shoulders had taken her fancy.

Once they paused to rest and to allow the old buccaneer to come up with them. Chiquita slipped her arms around Grog's Boy's neck.

"I do all thees for you," she said softly. "I keel that man for you."

Grog's Boy, who knew no morality but a buccaneer's, laughed and drew her close to him.

"Was there ever a lass like you?" he said, tasting her warm kiss.

HE WAS not as other buccaneers, this Grog's Boy. There was, however, nothing to suggest a difference, save a certain physical nobility which might yet prove the casing of a noble heart and mind. As yet he was but a boy in years, though a man in stature and experience.

He knew nothing of his parentage and cared little about it. What a boy never knows he little misses. Yet of late his brain

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had traveled down the ever-dimming path of memory in search of the beginnings of his existence.

According to Third Grog, he had been caught on a hook and line by a buccaneer who was fishing for shark off Santo Domingo. The explanation was not satisfactory to Grog's Boy.

A well-stamped memory was that of the first time he had actually taken an active part in the wild doings of late years. That was on the Isle of Aves but four years previously, in 1668, when he found himself sitting on the head of Mansvelt, the buccaneer chief before Morgan. Mansvelt was dying of rum and fever. Tom Swagger and Third Grog sat on his legs and Harry Satan and Dave Brodeley on his arms, while Dirk McAllister staked the delirious man to the ground.

Grog's Boy remembered that day distinctly. The weather was fine, the sea calm and blue. The isle was still, except for the chattering of the parrots. Down in the green palm grove by the beach the buccaneers were snoring after the all-night barbecue, and the smell of burning meat lingered in the boy's sense-memory.

That was the day Mansvelt died and Morgan became chief of the buccaneers.

Of course, Grog's Boy had memories of things and times before that, but they were all more or less out of focus. There was one memory of awaking in the arms of a man who was walking him up and down the deck of a ship and singing a lullaby. Overhead the masts were poking and raking the stars, and the stars seemed to be rushing about in a panic.

Then there was a memory of two men fighting in a cabin, and one splitting the other to the chin with a cutlas. Again he remembered being frightened by the sound of heavy guns firing and of a great yelling on the ship. This seemed strange to Grog's Boy afterward—that is, his fright—for he had since seen many a Spaniard battled, boarded, looted and scuttled.

Through all those more or less confused memories, there was always a man he knew, one who was a kind of father to him and from whom he had acquired his name. This was Third Grog, who was just the same man in the swamp as he had been when he reared the ship's baby on sugar, meat-juice and spoonfuls of rum and water. Third Grog—none knew his real name—was a short, heavy man, broad in the beam, his figurehead round and sea-scored and with ringed ears half hidden by straight, stiff gray hair. He probably got his *sobriquet* because he made it a rule never to exceed three jorums of rum.

"One's for the wit," he would say. "Two's for the heart. Three's for the cutlas arm. More'n that—y'are drunk!" To which he would invariably add, "And here's to loot!"

But Grog's Boy's memory was clear enough about the happenings after Mansvelt was buried (with a sprouting coconut for a memorial). Then the new leader, Morgan, led the buccaneers a dance for which the Spaniards paid the fiddler. They held Puerto Bello to ransom, raided the coast of Cuba, captured Maracaibo and fought their way out of the bay after they had been trapped by three Spanish ships. They brought their gold to Port Royal, where they were honored as heroes second only to that earlier buccaneer, Sir Francis Drake.

THEN came the sack of Panama. It was the mysterious upshot of this raid that brought Third Grog, Grog's Boy, Tom Swagger and the other two to the cages. At the time none of the buccaneers understood just what happened, but this is how it appeared to them:

Harry Morgan became intimate with the King's ministers at Jamaica. Shortly after Maracaibo he had a long conference with Sir Thomas Muddeford, then Governor. Presently Harry Morgan sent word to Brodeley, Red Daniel and all the other English freebooters of the Caribbees, and one fine day thirty-six ships and three thousand buccaneers assembled at a *rendezvous*—Cape Tiburon.

For the rest, everybody knows how the buccaneer fleet destroyed Fort San Lorenzo, the key to the Isthmus, and in the ensuing orgy in celebration piled three of their best ships on the reefs before Chagres; how, leaving fifteen hundred men aboard the fleet, Morgan, with thirteen hundred picked buccaneers, crossed the Isthmus in the face of decimating fever, starvation, snake-bites, Indians and innumerable objects placed against them by the retreating Spaniards; how the buccaneers took the queen city of the Pacific, looted the churches of their plate and jeweled vestments, took the gold and

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silver ingots of Peru from the storage vaults, removed everything of convertible value from the houses, and made a merry blaze of the whole town.

Old Third Grog had been through all that; so also had the seventeen-year-old boy who was kissing Chiquita in that black morass behind the Port Royal lagoon.

Yes, he had seen things, had this young buccaneer with the fine face. But there was one thing he had witnessed which he did not understand. It was this:

Within twelve hours' march of Chagres, Morgan called a halt and suggested to the buccaneers that, as a capping achievement, they raid Puerto Bello once more. And modest Harry Morgan allowed one of his Captains to lead the expedition, while he himself remained to guard the treasure with five picked men—Harry Satan, the Turk, Tom Swagger, Third Grog and Grog's Boy.

No sooner was the main body of the buccaneers gone to the attack of Puerto Bello, which was to the south, than Morgan had the treasure reloaded on the mules. With the five picked men he resumed the northward march to Chagres.

But that treasure train never reached Chagres, where thirty-three ships and fifteen hundred buccaneers awaited it. When the train came out of the woods it was upon a sandy cove. There was a single vessel in the offing. A boat came ashore in response to a signal from Morgan. Before dawn the mules were abandoned to the jaguars and the loot of Panama was stowed aboard that vessel, which made for Jamaica under all sail.

It was a frigate of King Charles's navy. The five picked buccaneers were astounded to learn that they were prisoners, as was Morgan, and that the loot of Panama, worth over $2,000,000, was confiscated to the Crown. All this because, it was said, the King of England and the King of Spain had patched up their quarrels and the raid on Panama had been perpetrated *after* the signing of a peace-treaty.

To Third Grog and the others it seemed queer. As for the abandoned buccaneers, they could do nothing but curse Harry Morgan, take the ships at Chagres, separate and resort to piracy for a living. Three of the five who were taken to Port Royal with Morgan were silenced by the rope at Gallows Point. The other two were now in the swamp.

So much for the history of the buccaneer lad, Grog's Boy.

It was after midnight when they came upon clearer going. The mangroves thinned into scattered clumps and the ground was firmer underfoot.

"Now we safe till day come," said Chiquita. "We rest here."

The two buccaneers, used to hardship as they were, dropped to the earth like felled oxen. Grog's Boy gave a sigh of satisfaction and went to sleep at once. So did Third Grog, but he first growled:

"There's a thorn in my right foot big as a bowsprit, but there it'll stay till morn for all o' me!"

When they were both asleep, Chiquita quietly spread her *serape* over the body of the young buccaneer. Then she rolled a tobacco leaf on her tawny arm. Smoking *cigarritos*, she sat on guard until dawn came.

CHAPTER III

THE HEART OF CHIQUITA

GROG'S BOY, carrying Third Grog on his back, staggered into a clearing of the *salina* and collapsed.

Chiquita, herself wan and fatigued, rushed to the young buccaneer's side and chafed his hands while she solicitously called him by name. She noticed that his eyes burned with an unearthly light, that his lips were dark and cracked and his skin, dry as parchment, burned as if a flame were beneath it.

The old buccaneer was apparently unconscious, for he lay in a heap where he had fallen from Grog's Boy's shoulders. The boot was missing from his right leg and the limb, swathed in rags bound with swamp withes, was swollen abnormally.

"Chiquita!" gasped Grog's Boy, raising himself on his elbow. "I fear me the fight's lost. I can't go another step."

"Maybe they no come this way. We lie still—no talk. Maybe soldier man walk past."

"I'd welcome them if they brought a bite of food or a sup of clean water. Girl," he broke off, looking curiously at Chiquita, "how do you stand it when buccaneers fail?"

Chiquita shrugged her brown shoulders nonchalantly.

"Me born here," said she. "Fever no

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touch. But when me leetle child plent' Arawak live here and have food and water. But now Spanish man have kill all Arawak and Chiquita have no friend left."

"By Heaven!" muttered Grog's Boy. "We're better off than that. You've been a friend to us, *Chiquitita mia!*"

He put his hands to his head and sank back upon the dry yellow sand. A hot wind, laden with miasmatic odors, blew out of the swamp. The young buccaneer licked his cracked lips with a parched tongue.

The girl stood off and looked at the two men. Old Third Grog was as still as a dead man. The morass insects settled on his lips and eye-corners, but not a muscle twitched. The thorn which he had neglected six days before had done its horrible work. He was unconscious from blood poisoning.

"He die soon," said Chiquita to herself.

Then she looked closely at Grog's Boy, who was consumed by fever. Presently the girl decided upon a course. She disappeared among the mangrove clumps.

No sooner was she gone than the old buccaneer uttered a groan and began to talk in a crazy voice.

"One's for the wit," said he. "Two's for the heart. Three's for the cutlas arm. More'n that—y'are drunk! And here's to loot!"

"Grog!" said the young buccaneer, raising himself and looking at the old man. "This is Boy. How is it, old mate?"

"W'are on a lee shore, Davy Brock," said Third Grog. "W'are on a lee shore. But with a breeze from the right quarter we'll make open water again. Morgan was never beat yet. He's a master mariner. Mark that, Davy Brock. A master mariner."

GROG'S BOY had never heard the name Davy Brock before. The old buccaneer's mind was at least seventeen years away.

"Stir up, Grog!" cried Grog's Boy. "Aye, w'are on a lee shore, but we'll beat to open sea yet. Don't ye know me, Grog? This is Grog's Boy—*Grog's Boy!*"

The old buccaneer raised his head. Momentarily the glaze left his eyes and he recognized his surroundings.

"Grog's Boy? So 'tis. So 'tis," he muttered. "Time for your meat-juice, Boy. Lord! Who ever heard o' a buccaneer nussin' a babby! But your father was a fine man, Boy; a fine man."

Grog's Boy started. He crawled close to the old man whose mind was straying hither and thither.

"Was he so?" asked Grog's Boy softly. "Tell me about him, Grog."

"'Twas all Mansvelt's doin'. A rash fool was Mansvelt," Third Grog jabbered. "She was an English craft, too. What if the master was a fool? But that was Mansvelt. Morgan knew better, but Mansvelt was chief. Drunk as a fiddler he was an' sunk the Englishman an' fished some of them out o' the sea when he knowed what he'd done. 'Twarn't the law o' the buccaneer to attack English craft."

"No, 'twarn't the law o' the buccaneer," said Grog's Boy, his eyes burning in his head. "And after that?"

"The Boy's father an' mother was among them. Boy weren't born—not yet. Morgan took her below—away from Mansvelt. Mansvelt was afeared for what he'd done an' said the job must be finished or our necks would stretch. The plank, by Harry! The plank for every mother's son o' them!"

"Aye aye; the plank," said Grog's Boy, his head whirling but his brain strangely alert to the meaning of it all.

"He was last—Boy's father. Happen he was a man o' rank. Ah, there was a man! Happen the Boy'll be proud o' his blood some day."

The crazy old buccaneer switched off into something that sounded like "Hush-a-boy. Hush-a-boy. Go to sleep, burn ye!"

"A man he was," said Grog's Boy, in an agony of spirit.

"Aye, that he were. I never saw a better. He come to the plank. Some way he got loose o' the bind. He snatched Mungo Matthews's cutlas from the sheath an' split Mungo's head. Ah, ye should ha' seen that man die! Fight! Amain! For Whitehall! Sent a round dozen of us to pot afore Davy Brock got him from behind."

"Davy Brock! Davy Brock!" said Grog's Boy in a fierce mutter.

"Aye, that same Davy. Hanged hisself on's own belt arterward—fear o' Morgan."

"Aye, Morgan. What was it *he* did?" Grog's Boy was bending over the old buccaneer like a fierce beast.

"Ah, he had the long head. Says he to Mansvelt, 'There's a babby born an' the woman's dead.'

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" 'Heave 'em overboard,' says Mansvelt.

"'Nay,' says Harry. 'Happen it ain't lucky to drown a babby born on the ship. Happen 'twill be luck to keep it.' "

Third Grog laughed deliriously.

"An' Mansvelt believed him. He'd 'a' believed Harry Morgan had he swore the cook were the Angel Gabriel."

"Third Grog!" the young buccaneer whispered in the old man's ear. "What was the name of the babby's father?"

Third Grog gave a groan, but presently he chuckled.

"Ax Morgan," said he. "Burn ye, ye galley-asp, ye've sp'iled the babby's feed!"

"His name!" snarled Grog's Boy, shaking the delirious buccaneer, himself frenzied with fever.

For answer Third Grog rolled flat on his back on the sand and began to drone through his shut teeth:

> Haul upon the bowline,
> The fore an' maintop bowline!
> Haul upon the bowline,
> The bowline—*haul!*

When Chiquita returned Third Grog was unconscious again and Grog's Boy lay with wide, unseeing eyes, staring up at the blazing heavens. There three or four buzzards circled and circled, ever descending nearer the spot where the buccaneers lay.

"What was his name, Grog? What was his name?" the lad kept repeating monotonously.

Chiquita stared at her lover, her arms full of bulbous leaves which she had plucked from a cactus in the dry *salina*. Presently alarm sped her actions. She drew the long knife with which she had slain the sentry and turned it to the employ of mercy. Bending over Grog's Boy carefully she cut the bulbous leaves in two and allowed the sweet, almost viscid, secretion of water to trickle between the young buccaneer's lips.

Then she laid the slimy, cold, inner surfaces of the cactus leaves upon his brow and bound them to his head with a strip from her *serape*. Having performed the same services for Third Grog, Chiquita rolled a tobacco-leaf and sat down to smoke and think.

THEY had spent six days in the *salina*—six days of suffering that would have killed less hardened men than the buccaneers, or any who were not immune, as Chiquita was, to the horrible climatic conditions of the mangrove swamp.

She had suffered much less than they. The fever touched her not at all, and, strangely enough, the mosquitos which battened upon the flesh of the white men did not even alight upon the girl's skin. Also, the food upon which they had existed supported her while it half poisoned Third Grog and Grog's Boy.

The water was stagnant and muddy; the juice from the cactus was only temporarily cooling to the palate, while their food was no more than "the oyster that grows on trees"—that strange rank bivalve which breeds on the mangroves.

For six days they had been alert through light and dark, ever moving, circling, advancing and retreating as they avoided the groups of soldiers from Passage Fort and Port Royal, who beat the *salina* in search of the escaped buccaneers. Twice they had been all but captured. Only Chiquita's knowledge and craft and a stealthy retreat into the heart of the black morass had saved them.

The neglected thorn in Third Grog's right foot had done its evil work before the end of the second day. The old buccaneer had bravely cut out the thorn from the swollen flesh with Chiquita's knife, but the blood was already tainted. On the fourth day he could hardly walk. On the fifth day he trailed the leg after him and on this, the sixth day, he was not only unable to stand but was hardly conscious of his companion's identity.

That morning a squad of soldiers had all but stumbled upon them. Chiquita scented the danger. It was not yet too late to retire. Grog's Boy, staggering and fever-weakened as he was, would not abandon the old buccaneer. With a last gathering of his strength he hoisted Third Grog to his back and reeled back into the depths of the *salina*, where he collapsed in a heap with his inert burden.

In a little while Chiquita arose, cut open some more cactus-leaves, poured the juice between the men's lips and bound the cool pulp to their brows. But she knew it would avail little. The cactus has wonderful cooling and drawing properties in fever, but only in conjunction with other remedies. What Grog's Boy needed was food, clean water and removal from this miasmatic fever-nest; and cactus would not help Third Grog's poisoned leg.

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Chiquita rolled another tobacco-leaf upon her left forearm and mused as she smoked. She was tired of discomfort herself. She longed for the pleasures of Port Royal, the praise of men and the exhilaration of good wine. True, she would have been loyal to Grog's Boy for all time had there been any hope of Grog's Boy's surviving.

But Grog's Boy was about to die unless——

Perhaps she had done wrong to bring them here. Yes. She had acted thoughtlessly. She ought to have known that the swamp and the *salina* spelled death to the white men. Hanging would have been a swift mercy compared with this slow torture by thirst, hunger, fever, clouds of mosquitos by night and swarms of sandflies by day.

Presently the soldiers would come and take them. They must not find her there with them. What sense was there in being hanged if it could be avoided? Yet the soldiers would come, for the fugitives could no longer retreat before them. It would be well if they came quickly. At least it would terminate the sufferings of the buccaneer she loved. The English doctor would give him soothing medicines for his fever and do something for old Tobacco Man's leg.

Chiquita smoked and pondered. Things had come to that pass where she would even be glad to tell the English soldiers where the fugitives were. By that move she would avert suspicion from herself and do mercy by the sufferers. Better swift death by hanging than slow torture and death in this horrible place. And there was always a chance that they might not be hanged after all.

She turned and examined her sick charges. Third Grog was quiet, save for an occasional moan. Grog's Boy was restless and chattering softly to himself. She knelt beside him and kissed his burning cheek. Hot tears fell upon his neck and she sobbed.

"*Adios*, Groggy's Boy—*adios!* Chiquita love plenty men, but never love so sweet."

SHE arose and walked away in an easterly direction, disappearing in a few moments beyond the scattered clumps of mangrove.

Although any view of the *salina* was exactly like any other, she walked unerringly forward, keeping a peak of the distant mountains directly ahead. Late in the afternoon she came upon a rough road hemmed in on either side by rank brush. After a pause she turned southward along the road.

Presently she came to the thick Spanish walls of Passage Fort. She passed the sentry, explaining that she came to see the commander, Colonel Vernon.

The Colonel eyed her suspiciously when she told him that she knew where the buccaneers were and that she could lead the soldiers to the spot. It was on his tongue to ask her what she knew of their escape from the cages and the killing of the guard. But for reasons of his own he refrained. His instructions from the Governor were to recover the bodies of these two men, dead or alive. If the former it little mattered, so long as their fate was ascertained and their bodies produced.

"Very good," said Colonel Vernon, "but the reward may not be paid until their bodies are delivered."

"How much?" said Chiquita.

"Thirty pieces of eight."

Now, Chiquita had never thought of a reward, but—if there was a reward, 'twould be a pity were it not claimed.

She hesitated and stared at the wall.

"I will even give it to the sergeant of the guard," said Colonel Vernon, "so you shall have it the moment these men are in his hands."

Chiquita shrugged her shoulders. There was a pause.

"Be quick!" she said impatiently.

The Colonel started. He had misunderstood. He hurried from the room. Five minutes later a file of soldiers was marching into the brush, headed by a sergeant who followed close at Chiquita's heels. The girl was smoking a rolled tobacco-leaf.

She led the soldiers straight to the spot where she had left Third Grog and Grog's Boy. The setting sun was casting long shadows of the mangrove clumps and the air was perceptibly cooler. Grog's Boy was sitting up. He had removed the cactus plaster from his brow. Third Grog was still inert upon the sand.

"In the King's name, surrender!" cried the sergeant, advancing with his men.

Grog's Boy staggered to his feet and stood there swaying, staring and astonished. Then his ears caught a strange sound and he saw Chiquita standing behind the soldiers. She was sobbing wildly.

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All at once he thought he understood. His brain cleared of the fever, but a new fury burned in it. His eyes fell upon the old buccaneer who had nursed him to manhood and who was now a helpless derelict at his feet. The crazed voice seemed to cry in his brain:

" '*Ah, there was a man! He snatched Mungo Matthews's cutlas from the sheath*——' "

"I'll thank ye for a sup of water," said Grog's Boy, staggering toward the sergeant.

"Here," said the sergeant, sheathing his sword. "Give this poor devil——"

His hand had no sooner fallen from the handle of his sword than another hand seized it.

"Down wi' the King!" roared Grog's Boy, his mighty shoulders squaring as he swung the sergeant's blade. "Ye fat land-scratchers, ye'll never brag ye took a buccaneer alive!"

The sergeant leapt out of the reach of that long arm and equally long blade. Third Grog stirred and raised himself on his elbow. He glowered dazedly at the scene.

"Here's to loot," he muttered, collapsing again.

The sergeant saw the determination of madness in the young buccaneer's eyes. He turned coldly upon the nearest soldier and said:

"You! Drop me that man."

The soldier obediently flung the stock of his musket to his shoulder. There came a cry from Chiquita of the Plaza. She darted forward like an arrow and flung her arms about Grog's Boy just as the musket flashed.

Grog's Boy, staring down into her face, saw it suddenly twisted with pain. Her arms tightened convulsively about his neck and her weight hung heavily. She, who had sold his life, had saved it.

Grog's Boy lowered her gently to the ground, flinging away the sword as he did so. The soldiers closed in and laid hands on the buccaneer.

"Avast, mates!" said Grog's Boy. "I strike my colors. Give her air. Give her air!"

The soldiers fell back, all except the sergeant, upon whom Chiquita's eyes were fixed. She raised an open, brown hand to him and whispered:

"Thirty—pieces—of eight!"

The sergeant looked at Third Grog and Grog's Boy. They were undoubtedly in his power. He drew a little leather bag from his belt and placed it in the dying girl's hand. She turned her eyes upon Grog's Boy—eyes filled with wonder at something. She pressed the thirty pieces of eight into his own hand and uttered a little laugh.

"Groggy's Boy," she said. "Chiquita think she do best. See how me punish."

She smiled—and died. Grog's Boy laid her on the ground and tried to stand up. He noticed that the mangroves squirmed like serpents, and the ground, the skies—everything was red. But it was not with the fire of rage that his eyes deceived him.

He got to his feet, stumbled, fell his length upon the ground and lay still.

They carried the two inert buccaneers to Passage Fort. And all night long Chiquita lay out upon the *salina*, her quiet eyes looking up at the stars.

CHAPTER IV

THE TOWER OF LONDON

FOR many a day after that Grog's Boy traveled in the red land of delirium. Once only there came a ray of natural light, though it lasted but a minute or two.

The mist cleared from his brain and he found himself in a stone-walled room of the fort. Standing over him were two men. One was a stranger to him, obviously a soldier of rank. The other was Harry Morgan, richly dressed in velvet and lace and wearing a jaunty cavalier bonnet ornamented with plumes.

" 'Tis luck that we found the boy and that he may live. He must not die, for my neck may depend upon him," Morgan was saying in his calmest manner.

"And the other?" inquired the soldier.

Morgan shrugged his shoulders.

"He may as well go the safer way. Yet—no! Treat him well. Give him to sawbones aboard the frigate. Who knows but he may live and be beholden to me. We sail to-night?"

That was all. Grog's Boy sank once more into the crimson world of distorted fancies. What he had seen and heard might have been only a trick of his fevered brain.

When he regained his normal senses he was awakened from sleep by a bustling of feet overhead. As he opened his eyes he knew at once that he was in a hammock aboard a ship at sea. The vessel swayed

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gently and her timbers creaked as she rose and fell languidly upon the wave.

Upon the deck overhead there was a continuous patter of bare feet and the sound of a strong voice issuing orders in the peculiar staccato manner of the King's navy officers.

"Clearing for action," muttered Grog's Boy. "Now where am I, and where was I last? Ah! . . . Poor Chiquita! . . . Poor old Grog! . . ."

He lay still for a while, thinking.

"Happen I should be thankful I'm not hanged—yet," he concluded.

The bustling overhead ceased. Although Grog's Boy could see nothing, he could follow the meaning of everything. The decks were cleared, he knew. There was an enemy in the offing. The present silence was that tense period which comes before the burst of battle.

The old spirit thrilled in him. He got out of the hammock. The moment his feet touched the cabin floor his head spun and his limbs tingled as if covered with biting ants. But this passed off and presently he managed to make his way to a port through which clear sunshine poured.

Through the port he could see two Spanish ships about a quarter of a league to starboard. Had he known it there was a third Spaniard to larboard. The two that he could see were apparently prepared for fight, but were observing caution, knowing the fighting qualities of even a single English frigate.

But to his surprise the minutes flew past and not a shot was fired on either side. Presently the strong voice snapped out a few more orders. The bustling was renewed more actively than before and the ship began to speed over the waves, while the two Spaniards slipped astern and out of Grog's Boy's vision.

"Cracking on sail, by Harry!" muttered Grog's Boy. "The white-livered lubbers have refused fight. What matter if there were six Diegos!"

Puzzled and disgusted, he crept back to his hammock. He was glad enough to stretch himself flat again.

AN HOUR later the door of the cabin swung open, and who should appear before him but Harry Morgan!

"Ho, Grog's Boy!" he cried, seeing that the lad was conscious. "Seems your hawser has held. Am glad, Boy—glad! They would 'a' hanged ye but I claimed ye for a witness—and Third Grog, too."

"Does he live?" asked Grog's Boy, his face lighting up.

"Aye, and as cheery as ever, spite o' having a leg o' Jamaica mahogany. Ye shall see him presently where he lies on the sunny side on deck. We shall ha' ye up in a brace o' shakes."

Grog's Boy looked at Morgan and wondered. The man was unlike himself. His eyes sparkled. For once the cold man seemed warm. But the young buccaneer said nothing. He did not even ask how he came aboard this King's ship, which he presently recognized as the same as that which had brought the arrested buccaneers and the loot from the cove south of Chagres. But he suspected that the vessel was bound for England and that Harry Morgan, if indeed he were a prisoner, was going to his trial.

"Why," said Grog's Boy after a long silence, "why have ye saved me and Third Grog for witnesses when ye hanged Tom Swagger, Harry Satan and the Turk?"

"Sirrah!" thundered Morgan, his face blackening with sudden anger. "Keep your tongue still. Those men were hanged by the Governor's order, even as ye would ha' hanged if I had not claimed ye as witness for me, as was my privilege."

"Harry Morgan," said Grog's Boy, "I have nothing against ye that I did not share the guilt of myself. I can speak well of ye as a gentleman of the sea that waged war against the King's enemies. But why choose me—and Third Grog?"

"I'll tell ye that," said Morgan, his face clearing, "though happen ye slack aback as ye did a moment past, I may change my opinion."

He looked straight into Grog's Boy's eyes and went on:

"I ha' no affection for such as flaps his tongue to no end, like a sail that draws no wind, not being made fast. Grog's Boy, 'tis a virtue to be sparing of words."

It sounded more like a hint than a statement of fact. Having delivered himself of this and no more, Harry Morgan laughed lightly and left the cabin.

Later two seamen came and lifted Grog's Boy from the hammock. They bore him to the deck, where a rough couch had been prepared for him alongside another. Upon this lay an earringed, gray-haired old buccaneer. It was Third Grog.

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"Ahoy, matey!" roared the old man in a voice that recent suffering had not in the least impaired for heartiness. "So there ye be, as ever was, an' here I be—except for a leg as that sawbones took from me by foul play, me bein' unarmed an' unable to lift my fist."

"So ye lost the leg, Grog?"

"Lost it? No!" shouted Third Grog. "'Twere *tuk* from me—looted by that swab.

"'Sawbones,' says I, 'happen 'tain't fair that ye saw it off. 'Tis a insult to a man as ever hoped to have his limbs blowed off in gloryus fight. Sawbones,' says I, '*don't* saw it off. Bind it to a carronade an' ha' the gunner fire the touch-hole!'

"But it warn't no use," concluded Third Grog sadly. "Sawbones swore as it were a lovely leg to saw off, an' he couldn't let it go. So I swallowed my three jorums and laid me down.

"'There y'are, Sawbones!' says I. 'Amain! I defies ye!' An' off she came!"

"But, Grog's Boy," added the old buccaneer, his face suddenly beaming, "the ship's carpenter is a making of the finest wooden leg as ever a man wore. 'Tis of Jamaica wood—mahogany. A bit hefty, I'll grant ye, but 'twill be as handy as the real thing and not half as mortial!"

SUDDENLY Third Grog poked his young comrade in the ribs and pointed toward the three Spanish ships on the horizon astern.

"Ah, Morgan be the long-headed one!" said he. "Think ye, Boy, the Diegos were arter him?—though happen they'd as lief lay hands on him, too. But 'tis the loot o' Panama. 'Twas never taken off at Port R'yal."

"Aye, aye," said Grog's Boy. "But why did the frigate refuse fight? 'Twas never Morgan's way."

"Happen ye be right," whispered Third Grog, glancing around. "'Tis the long head o' the man. This frigate has a commander, but 'twould seem to a one-eyed man as Morgan commands the commander. Morgan goes to trial for piracy. Now, piracy be cuttin' throats, scuttlin', plankin' an' breakin' laws permiskwis. Harry Morgan were never a pirate. He be a buccaneer like you an' me, an' buccaneers is gentlemen of the sea an' not to be confuscated wi' slit-gills an' the like."

"Ay, but fight was offered," Grog's Boy insisted.

"Lord, Boy, have I trained your wits for nothing' Look ye! There be a pact wi' Spain. Morgan knew nought of it till *arter* he sacked Panama. Now he goes to London Town for trial, his conscience bein' clear, so to speak. On the way the Diegos seek a private settlin' o' the score, hopin' to recapture the loot. Harry Morgan, havin' great respeck for the law, remembers 'tis unlawful to wiolate a treaty an' refuses fight. Now ye see?"

"I don't," said Grog's Boy.

"Happen ye have a thick head, Boy. 'Twill be a card in his defense, showin' he would never ha' sacked Panama had he known o' the treaty."

"Bah!" said Grog's Boy impatiently. "He knew before we sailed on San Lorenzo. 'Tis all two-faced."

"Sssh, Boy! Remember Tom Swagger wi' his loose tongue a hangin' out on the gibbet. Besides," added Third Grog, "Harry Morgan ha' been good to us. Lord bless ye, Boy, arter that swab of a sawbones looted my leg, Harry Morgan were like sweetheart an' mother to me. Morgan's a good lad, I tell ye!"

"I—see," said Grog's Boy slowly, and a broad grin distorted his good looks. "I—see!"

AFTER all, as Grog's Boy had told Morgan to his face, he had nothing against the buccaneer chief; rather he was fairly disposed toward the man. Except for his deserting his men at Chagres and, as Grog's Boy suspected, playing into the hands of certain persons in order to secure the loot for a limited division, Morgan had played the game of the buccaneer with a high degree of respectability. No doubt this view-point of the young adventurer's had been the saving of him for a witness.

The frigate was again attacked by Spaniards off the Little Antilles and again off the Azores. In each case not a shot was fired by the frigate. The English ship cleared for action and made a great pretense of fight, so that the Spaniards observed caution. Then the frigate would out-maneuver and out-sail the enemy. Sometimes she took the wind right aft and sped long leagues out of her course to avoid losing her distinguished prisoner and the treasure in the hold.

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What with these deviations and a final Spanish attempt to cut the frigate out of the English channel, it took the best part of three months to make the Port of London.

During that time Third Grog and Grog's Boy completely recovered their health, although the old buccaneer could never recover his looted leg. During that time, also, Morgan showed them a pleasant attention which tickled the old buccaneer's vanity and stirred the younger one's sense of humor.

Still, Grog's Boy had much to thank Morgan for. One day the buccaneer chief asked the young man if he could read and write. Learning that Grog's Boy did not know "a" from "b" he declared that it must be remedied. Later the chaplain of the frigate gave Third Grog and Grog's Boy a lesson in letters, choosing for a textbook the Bible and particularly the story of Jonah and the fish. This Jonah, the chaplain explained, was a man who was thought to bring bad luck to the ship upon which he sailed from Joppa to Tarshish.

"Now, I ha' sailed by the main for fifty year," interrupted Third Grog, who was suspicious of the whole proceeding, "an' I never heerd o' any such ports. Happen the man as wrote that yarn were a swab. But this here Jonah must ha' been a relation o' Davy Brock, a man as I knowed in Mansvelt's time. There was never any luck in anything where Davy Brock were consarned."

"Sarved him right!" he declared, when the chaplain read how the sailors threw Jonah overboard. "We might ha' done that wi' Davy Brock, but he hanged hisself on's own belt fust—fear o' Morgan."

But when it came to the part where the great fish swallowed Jonah and Jonah lived in the fish's belly three days and three nights, Third Grog began to glare at the chaplain. When the tale reached its end with the fish vomiting forth Jonah upon dry land, Third Grog lost his temper and refused to hear more.

"That yarn won't do, chapling!" said he. "It won't do for a man as knows the nature of fish like I do—except maybe for that last part. Happen that be true, for if this Joner were anything like Davy Brock, hang me if I blame the fish for havin' its stomach turned!"

Grog's Boy had not overlooked Third Grog's mention of the man Davy Brock. There suddenly came to his mind a clear vision of the *salina* and the memory of the old buccaneer's semi-delirium. As soon as that first lesson in letters was over, Grog's Boy asked about Davy Brock.

"Happen he was the man that got my father in the back?" said he, taking a plunge.

Third Grog's face was a wonder to behold.

"Now, who in blazes told ye *that?*" he cried.

"You told me—out there in the *salina*," said Grog's Boy, and he repeated Grog's story as well as he could.

"Now what was my father's name?" he asked, without giving the other a chance to deny what he had said.

Third Grog wrinkled his old face and looked hard at the sea. Finally deciding that the murder was out, he answered:

"I dunno, Boy, and that's Gospel truth, but if ship's gossip counts for loot, happen he was a man o' rank."

Grog's Boy waited, keeping his eyes fixed on Third Grog. The old buccaneer shook his head uneasily and added:

"Morgan knows. Ax him."

Grog's Boy "axed" the day before the frigate came to London. Morgan seemed startled at first. Then he led the young buccaneer to the cabin, where he produced a packet of papers sewn up in oilskin.

"Grog's Boy," said Morgan abruptly, "I saw your father once and I spoke with your mother ere she died."

Then he told a story which was almost identical with the one Third Grog babbled in the *salina*, adding that with a rough knowledge of sickness and treatment he had soothed the dying woman's last hour.

"To me she entrusted you, Boy, and some papers which her husband, your father, placed in her bosom when it was clear Mansvelt would sink the ship. Your father was an English gentleman, a Royalist who was seeking fortune anew and flying from the too close neighborhood of Oliver Cromwell.

"There is your name and birthright, Grog's Boy," said Morgan, handing over the oilskin packet. "You are come to England, a man grown. And remember," he added, fixing his cold eyes upon the young buccaneer, "Harry Morgan was ever your friend."

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He paused and drummed on the table with his long fingers, which were as white as any courtier's. Presently he said:

"I take your word for it, Grog's Boy, that ye will show these papers to none until y'are safe in London Town."

THAT night the frigate reached the Port. Next morning Harry Morgan, Third Grog and Grog's Boy were rowed, under guard, to a landing in the shadow of an old tower, wherein the two witnesses were locked. Harry Morgan was taken to more comfortable quarters.

"Boy," said Third Grog, when the jailers had left them alone, "we be prisoners of some mark, for this is the Tower of London."

The room in which they were lodged was clearly a secure prison, but it was fairly comfortable. There were two pallets, a table and two stools. A turnkey presently brought them a fat meal with a large pitcher of good ale.

As soon as the meal was disposed of, Grog's Boy, being momentarily safe in London Town, took the oilskin cover from the packet Morgan had given him and spread out the first of the papers.

Alas for Grog's Boy and the chaplain's teachings! The former could make nothing of the contents of the packet. The language was couched in strange terms and written in a cruel hand.

While the young buccaneer was laboring over them, the prison door swung open and in rushed a fussy, little, old gentleman in a green coat and with a tuft of upstanding hair on the fore part of a very bald head.

"Toolooralay!" was his odd greeting. "I'm Squibbs, of the King's Bar, retained in the defense of one Harry Morgan. Odds fish! And you?"

He twisted his cockatoo-like head toward Third Grog.

"I'm Third Grog," said that wooden-legged old rogue, "an' here's to loot!"

"Loot!" exclaimed Master Squibbs with a horrified look. "Loot is a hanging word. I pray you avoid it. And you?" turning to the younger buccaneer.

"I'm Grog's Boy."

"Toolooralay!" said the gentleman in the green coat, raising himself jauntily on his toes as he uttered the queer word. "By my sacred skeepskin! And what have you there?" he added, noticing the papers.

"'Twill be a favor if you can tell me," said Grog's Boy, his troubled frown disappearing. "These papers, given me by Harry Morgan, contain my name and condition."

Grog's Boy eagerly thrust the papers into the legal gentleman's hands. At first the little man handled them as if they might contain gunpowder and a lighted fuse. Finally he decided in his own mind that with one eye he could tell if they were compromising, while the other eye refused to look at all.

After the first glance at the first of the papers, however, both eyes came into full service, and they almost popped from his head.

"Odds liver and tripe!" he gasped, sitting down by the table and feverishly going through the papers one after another. During the entire perusal he kept up a stream of exclamations.

"Marry come up! Toolooralay! Stupendous! Stupefying! Marvelous! Amazing! By—my—sacred—sheepskin!"

Then he abruptly jumped to his feet and stared at Grog's Boy.

"'Tis the same!" he muttered. "The nose—the eyes! His son for a guinea! Oh, toolooralay! Here's luck! And saved his majesty's blessed life at Warfield Towers. Oh, mine uncle!"

He suddenly dropped his fantastic speech and manner. He came around the table, stood directly before Grog's Boy and, laying a hand over his heart, bowed most graciously to the handsome young buccaneer.

"Sir Grog's Boy Warfield," said he, "permit me to be the first to welcome you home to Merrie England!"

CHAPTER V

SIR RICHARD DECLARES HIMSELF

IN THE documents which Harry had given to Grog's Boy, and which roused Master Squibbs to heights of excitement, there was nothing referring to the young buccaneer, for he was unborn at the time they were penned. But the papers, which were deeds and titles to certain estates, had undoubtedly been the property of Grog's Boy's father, and in them that father's name and condition appeared as Sir Richard Warfield, Baronet, of Warfield Towers in Warwickshire.

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According to Master Squibbs, who claimed to have served the Warfields from time to time as a man of law, Grog's Boy bore a startling resemblance to the family of Warfield and particularly to his father, the late Sir Richard.

"Odds bods!" said Squibbs. "There should be little to do in establishing thy name and right, if the King be pleased to recognize them."

"What has the King to do with it?" Grog's Boy demanded, awaking from the daze of a half-stunned mind. "What is mine is surely mine."

"Sssh!" warned Master Squibbs. "The King," he said, closing one eye like a wise cockatoo, "is the law."

He then proceeded to outline the situation and the history of the house of Warfield.

After the execution of Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth, Prince Charlie, the present Merrie Monarch, attempted to regain the crown. Sir Richard Warfield was a staunch friend of the Stuarts. After the Prince was defeated at Worcester he became a hunted fugitive in in his own kingdom before he finally escaped in a ship to France. In his wanderings he was hidden for a time at Warfield Towers.

Later Oliver Cromwell heard of Warfield's loyal protection of the Prince, and Sir Richard fell under the Lord Protector's displeasure. With Grog's Boy's mother, who should then have been cloistered in calm, Sir Richard Warfield was compelled to remove himself from Cromwell's too close notice. The island of Jamaica was but then taken from the Spaniards and was a land of promise to the English. Thither Sir Richard sailed, with Lady Warfield, in an enterprising merchantman that was prepared to defy Spaniard and buccaneer alike.

Warfield Towers remained desolate until the restoration of the Prince as Charles II. The restored monarch, remembering the loyalty of the Warfields and believing his old protector and his lady dead without issue, gave the title and estates to a brother. This brother of Sir Richard, one Geoffrey Warfield, was also a Royalist although, it was said, something of a chameleon when it came to a change of political color.

This uncle of Grog's Boy was now dead some years and his son, Sir Gregory Warfield, reigned in his stead, or rather in Grog's Boy's. Sir Gregory, according to Squibbs, was a gay blade and quite a favorite of the Merrie Monarch, although at present living in seclusion at Warfield Towers after a mad season in London Town. He was, according to report, a generous gambler, a confessed rake, a ready duelist, a disciple of Bacchus, and other things that made Grog's Boy fancy he might be a very decent fellow.

FOR the present, however, Grog's Boy was in the toils of the law and could not even communicate with his merry cousin, who appeared to be but little older than himself. He was glad, therefore, when after weeks in the Tower with Third Grog, the day came for the trial of Harry Morgan. The two buccaneers were taken to the tribunal after a last long session with Master Squibbs.

"Speak the speech I pray you, as I pronounced it to you," said Squibbs, like one declaiming from a book, "and let your own discretion be your tutor, though I will even make endeavor to lead you on so as to give it smoothness. For the rest —" Squibbs raised himself on his toes —"tooloora-lay!"

Third Grog was the first to be called to witness. Grog's Boy, in the meantime, was kept under guard until his turn came. The old buccaneer afterward confessed to a feeling of fear when he was led, stumping on his mahogany leg, into that imposing chamber of law. He had never seen anything like it before.

The court was crowded with lords and ladies, for it was whispered that the King was interested in this trial. Over their heads towered helmeted men carrying halberds, and there were gorgeous creatures bearing maces. Four fat judges in ermine drowsed on the woolsack. At first Third Grog thought he was facing that "holy terror," the Spanish Inquisition. At the prisoner's bar sat Harry Morgan, as resplendent in raiment as any in court. He seemed bored by the proceedings, continually covering his mouth to hide a yawn.

After Third Grog was sworn to tell the truth (which the old buccaneer took as an implication that he was an habitual liar, and resented), Master Squibbs, who had discarded his fantastic manner and his green coat for an air of gravity and a black robe, began the examination.

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"Your name, sirrah?" said he to the wooden-legged buccaneer.

"Third Grog," was the reply, in a hurricane voice that awoke the slumbering judges.

"Your real name, sirrah?"

"My real name?" echoed Grog, somewhat staggered. "Why, burn ye, I forgot it forty year ago!"

The court began to titter.

"Leastways," continued Third Grog, "my last name used to be Holly, but my first name I never could get my tongue around. 'Twere a main hard name to make fast to, an' now I forget what it were, as you might say."

THE audience in court was now openly laughing, and the judges were staring at Third Grog like a row of puzzled owls. Harry Morgan's shoulders were shaking.

"Very well, Third Grog," said Squibbs. "*Qu'il âge avait?*"

"Eh?" snorted Grog, suspiciously.

"How old are you?"

"Why burn me," said the buccaneer. "That I've forgot, too—same time my fust name went by the board. Happen I be a pretty old man, for I were exactly twenty when I went to sea an' that be fifty year ago come Candlemas."

"Then you are in your seventieth year," said Squibbs.

"Eh?" said Mr. Holly, alias Third Grog. He glared at the legal gentleman, then turned appealing eyes upon the four owls on the woolsack. All at once the old buccaneer brought his fist down upon the rail with a smack, and burst out in a guffaw.

"By Harry!" he roared. "An' here I been wonderin' how old I were for the last twenty-five year!"

And so contagious was the laughter that made the tears trickle down his cheeks that in a moment the court was rocking with mirth, while the helmeted men with the halberds shouted for peace. But the owls never even blinked.

After a time the examination proceeded, but it was continually interrupted by explosions of merriment from the audience in court. The whole business savored more of a comedy-play than the serious trial of a man charged with piracy. There seemed to be no prosecution or prosecutors; at least, Third Grog could not distinguish defense from prosecution, for all the questions asked by various legal gentlemen seemed only concerning the *worthiness* of one Harry Morgan.

Unfortunately, Third Grog's conception of virtue was clearly a buccaneer's and several times he said things that plainly distressed Master Squibbs, made the prosecuting lawyers turn the other way and caused perceptible uneasiness among the owls.

"Ttt, ttt, ttt!" interrupted Master Squibbs, as Grog began a description of that carouse after San Lorenzo when the buccaneers piled three ships on the reefs off Chagres. "Cleave to the facts. Morgan opposed rum and he was no pirate, you say. There is a difference between a pirate and a buccaneer?"

Third Grog waxed eloquent on the difference between "gentlemen o' the sea and slit-gills as scuttles, planks and wiolates laws permiskwis." Master Squibbs beamed and the clerks scribbled furiously.

"And he had a brave, kindly heart?" suggested Master Squibbs.

"Brave!" bellowed Third Grog. "Why, burn me, I ha' seen him tackle a whole crew as ever was! Hark ye what happened at Maracaibo. Three Diego ships surprised us, an' the whole crew of us drunk as flies in molasses. Morgan come down that deck with a naked steel an' like a red-hot fiend out o'——"

"Ttt, ttt, ttt, ttt!" cried Master Squibbs in horror. "Pray mend your language, sirrah. Brave—*and* kindly, you were about to say?" he added, coaxingly.

Then Third Grog almost wept as he told the story of that swab sawbones, and the history of the mahogany leg, wherein Morgan appeared as tender as mother and sweetheart. And from that he passed on to a greater instance of Morgan's humanity, how he saved the babby from Mansvelt, as were nothing but a slit-gill pirate, *if* they must know.

The audience in court became silent at this last story, where it had fairly quaked over the tale of the wooden leg. Morgan smiled and covered his mouth with his hand; Master Squibbs beamed, and the owls on the woolsack, seemingly satisfied that the proper sort of evidence was now forthcoming, fell into a state of complete hibernation.

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THERE was a buzz in court when Third Grog was thanked for his evidence and dismissed. The buzz swelled louder when the much-adventured "babby" was brought in as the next witness. Some surprise there seemed among the ladies when they saw that the "babby" had grown into six feet of handsome, broad-shouldered buccaneer, attired in cowskin breeches, wide-topped sea-boots, Spanish doublet, and a broad crimson silk sash with tasseled ends dangling about his knees.

One of the owls opened one eye as Grog's Boy swore to tell the truth, then went to sleep again.

"Sirrah!" cried Master Squibbs. "What is your name?"

"Grog's Boy," said the young buccaneer.

Again the court tittered, as if in anticipation of more fun.

"What is your real name—the name your godfathers and godmothers gave ye?"

"I never had any," said Grog's Boy, "nor have I ever been christened, but I believe that by right my real name is Sir Richard Warfield." Unconsciously Grog's Boy adopted the given name of his father.

THERE was a strange quick hush in court, a sudden turning of heads and a concentration of eyes. Squibbs glanced at the owls. They were only half-awakened. He completed the stirring by pretending not to have heard rightly himself. He shouted at the top of his voice:

"*What!* Repeat, sirrah, for my lords. What say your real name is?"

"Sir Richard Warfield," said Grog's Boy, louder than before. "Leastways, that was the name of my father who was killed by Mansvelt, the pirate, off Sant' Domingo in the year 1655—Sir Richard Warfield, of Warfield Towers, in Warwickshire."

There came a murmur, swelling into a babble in court. Every one was talking, arguing, explaining, and all eyes were fixed upon the young buccaneer with the patrician face. The four judges were now wide awake and had their heads together, whispering while they side-glanced at Grog's Boy. Presently one of the judges raised a hand and asked—

"Is this the—the infant of whom the—the wooden-legged witness spoke?"

"Apparently, m' lords!" said Master Squibbs, pretending as much amazement as any one.

"His mother then, if he speaks truth, was Lady Warfield, who sailed for Jamaica upon that merchantman which never returned," said the interested judge. "Ask him where is his mother?"

Grog's Boy replied through Squibbs that his mother died on the pirate vessel at the hour of his birth.

"Then how was your life spared?" asked the same judge, while his three fellows blinked solemnly.

When the young buccaneer replied that Harry Morgan had saved his life and afterward reared and protected him, preserving the papers which were his birthright, he glanced at the prisoner, as did every one in court. Morgan was laughing softly, showing his teeth in a most generous, self-depreciatory way.

Again there was a buzz of talk in court. The judges whispered together. They were considering the advisability of suspending proceedings pending a notification to the King of what had happened. Presently a signal was made to one of the gorgeous creatures of the mace, who gabbled through a loud, pompous speech beginning and ending with—

"*Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!* God save the King!"

Next moment Master Squibbs grabbed Grog's Boy by the arm. He almost rushed him out of the court and through a great throng that wished to have a closer view of this young buccaneer who had declared himself a baronet by heredity.

Even when Third Grog and Grog's Boy, escorted by halberds, were led to a conveyance which was to return them to the Tower of London, numerous beruffled and befeathered persons of seemingly high rank stood on each side of a lane formed for the passage of the buccaneers.

An effervescence of spirit prompted Grog's Boy to swing his bonnet at them. Many gentlemen laughed good naturedly and returned the salutation. Old Third Grog, not to be outdone in doing honor to his mate, flourished his bonnet.

"Here's to Sir Dickon!" shouted the old rogue, "—and loot!"

And Master Squibbs, his face glowing like a wet moon, pressed up to the side of the conveyance and whispered:

"Now 'tis the King's move. He shall hear of this within the hour, I warrant ye. As for that brave, kindly man, Harry Mor-

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gan—" Master Squibbs placed a finger on the side of his nose and winked.

"Too*loo*ralay!" he chuckled.

CHAPTER VI

THE MERRIE MONARCH

IT IS just as difficult to substitute the name, Sir Richard Warfield, for the more familiar one, Grog's Boy, as it was for the young buccaneer to realize the change which had suddenly come about in his affairs.

As he and Third Grog were wheeled back to the Tower, he felt astonishment at the sensation which the announcement of his identity had caused in court. Of course, his father had been a great man in his day. He had been not only the friend of the unhappy first Charles but the savior of his son, the present King, in those days when he was hunted like a rabbit. But——!

And there it was. Yesterday he was a buccaneer and wondering how long his neck would remain unstretched; to-day he was a baronet—third baronet of the house of Warfield, which had been titled by James I in the year 1611. His life suddenly appeared in the hues of a waking dream wherein the mind can hardly distinguish the reality from the fantasy. Either he was a buccaneer and would wake up presently on the Isle of Aves to smell burning meat in the air, or he was already awake and was a baronet, and the ransoming of Maracaibo, the ravaging of Cuba, the wild scenes of Panama, the horrors of the cages and the black morass—and Chiquita—were all a vivid, vast chimera.

As for Harry Morgan, the quiet humor in which Grog's Boy had followed the movements of the buccaneer chief up to the time of his trial, was now tickled almost to outright laughter. It was clear that the trial of Morgan was designed as a solemn farce and so executed.

Of course, it was never intended that Harry Morgan should hang. What with his alleged ignorance of the treaty with Spain, his declared loyal services against what he considered the enemies of his gracious Majesty Charles, his proven nobility of heart as witnessed by his kindness toward the dying Lady Warfield and the evidence that he was "ag'in' rum and permiskwis wiolations," as per Third Grog, Harry Morgan's acquittal was already a foregone conclusion. Squibbs had got to the kernel of the nut with one expressive, comprehensive word—*toolooralay!*

Then was there not over £400,000 worth of loot being carted from the frigate in the Port at that very moment? It went to a destination never revealed, though some said 'twas close upon the Royal Mint. And after the acquittal of Morgan did not the King, who had caused the great buccaneer's arrest and trial, summon him to Whitehall? Did he not there and then dub him Sir Harry Morgan, Knight, and send him back to the Caribbees as Lieutenant-Governor of that very Jamaica where he had formerly been King of the Buccaneers?

But those were the merry days and the King was a right Merrie Monarch!

THIRD GROG and Grog's Boy were to have some personal experience of the King's merriment that very night. Young Sir Richard's resurrection, or rather the romance of his merely existing, was the talk of London Town. There were all sorts of speculations abroad as to what the King would do toward restoring Warfield's son to his rights and at the same time not oust that royal favorite, Sir Gregory, from his. Over a bowl of sack at the Griffin Head, for instance, young Lord Strafford made a wager with Sir John Staines.

"Mark me, Sir John," said he, "the King will wed Sir Gregory to his neighbor, Mistress Laura of Fernleigh Hall, and create a Lord of Fernleigh!"

"There would be poetry and justice," quoth Sir John, "for even now Sir Gregory notes her coming like a sun-worshiper. Yet I take ye for the sport."

About eight o'clock that night, the room which confined Third Grog and Sir Richard in the Tower was invaded by a party of gay blades, all more or less merry with wine. They swarmed in upon the two buccaneers, while the turnkeys stood by and grinned.

Grog's Boy suddenly found himself half smothered by embracing arms, while their owner, a young spark of the court, declared that he had "ever had an affection for pirates, cutthroats and sinners."

There must have been a dozen of them, but Grog's Boy was quick to understand that their mission was friendly. Not so Third Grog. The old buccaneer was ever suspicious of things that had no precedent

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in his experience. While Third Grog's Boy struggled in the embracing arms, he heard Third Grog's voice as it had oft arisen in sea-fight.

"Irons! Irons!" he yelled. "Boarders ahoy! To me, m' bully boys! Drop yer beams, burn ye! Drop yer beams. *Ou-e-e-e-e!* Amain! For Whitehall!"*

When Grog's Boy escaped from the affectionate arms and rushed to Third Grog's assistance, he found the old rogue seated in a corner behind a stool, which was his barricade. Having neither cutlas nor other weapon, he had fallen upon defense. His wooden leg was pointed over the stool at the invaders and it bore more than a fancied resemblance to the barrel of a blunderbuss.

"Burn yer souls!" he bellowed. "The fust man as boards me I'll blow higher 'n the angels!"

The invaders were fairly tearful with mirth; but a truce was arranged. Then the party of court gallants informed the buccaneers that they were free, and that the King himself commanded their presence. Third Grog and Grog's Boy were rushed from the Tower amid much hallooing, and shoved into a gorgeous vehicle mounted by lackeys. The gay blades mounted horses, and thus the two adventurers were escorted, as in a dream, to Whitehall Palace.

HERE Third Grog and Grog's Boy were given no breathing space but were promptly ushered into the presence of the Merrie Monarch. Charles was seated in a wide hall with polished floors. Around him were grouped a number of ladies and gentlemen, and a burst of laughter greeted the end of a story which the King had been telling.

At the sound of confusion in the entrance, the group fell away, leaving his Majesty's direct vision clear. His eyes immediately fell upon Grog's Boy. Young Sir Richard Warfield returned his gaze with unaffected interest.

Charles was a pleasing man to look at, although Grog's Boy decided at once that his Majesty was more pretty flesh than sinew. He had a weak mouth, but this the young buccaneer forgave him by reason of the twinkle in his eyes and the full heartiness of his laugh as his gaze turned to Third Grog.

*"*Ou-e-e-e-e!* Amain! For Whitehall!"—the battle-cry of the English buccaneers.

And laugh he did—loudly, and without any effort to cease until the amusement did. The two buccaneers were the amusement, and the court laughed with the King.

Grog's Boy's face reddened. He hated laughter at his expense, as any man does; but there was more than that. If he was, indeed, Sir Richard Warfield of Warfield Towers, he resented, not for himself but for his father's sake, that he should be the butt of amusement. Yet in his new-born pride of blood he realized with a strange embarrassment that there was a ludicrous contrast between what Sir Richard Warfield, Baronet, should be and the seeming buccaneer that he was.

Presently he realized that it was mainly at Third Grog they were laughing. The old buccaneer must have been a side-splitting figure in that grand room and in contrast with the lords and ladies who were grouped beside the King. Third Grog added to the merriment when, in an effort to advance upon the King's signaled invitation, the tip of his mahogany leg slipped on the polished floor and he collapsed with a crash almost at his Majesty's feet!

Then an odd thing occurred. While Charles and his gentlemen laughed uproariously, a young lady darted from the group at the King's right and attempted to raise the old buccaneer.

Grog's Boy was not a moment behind her, and their eyes met over the prostrate Third Grog. Young Sir Richard's were ablaze with suppressed anger; the lady's glowed with moist sympathy; but in that look their meeting eyes melted together in a common feeling and understanding.

Perhaps it was the simple rebuke thus administered to his sex, or maybe the King merely grew tired of the comedy; but at any rate he suddenly clapped his hands. Next instant one could have heard a whisper. Charles turned his eyes upon the lady and then upon Grog's Boy. He seemed about to say something when Third Grog, who was again on his feet, spoke up.

"Ax pard'n, Adm'ral," said he; "King, I mean—by the grace o' God, King! I've walked the deck in a gale as would ha' split mountings, but them planks o' yourn be slippier than a Diego's waist arter a——"

"Avast, Grog!" said Grog's Boy, quickly.

"Marry!" said the King, frowning. "What strange language is this?'

Third Grog looked unhappy and con-

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fused. Then Grog's Boy—or rather Sir Richard, Baronet—found his tongue.

"Your Majesty," said he, smiling, although he hardly realized that he was talking and how he was talking, "my friend is an old sea-dog, such as ha' done good service for his country. He says that if the decks of your Majesty's frigates were as slippery as your Majesty's floors, England could never hold her footing upon the high seas."

"Bravo, Sir Buccaneer!" cried the King with immense delight; and forthwith he bade Grog's Boy relate the whole story of his adventurous life.

"There, your Majesty," said Sir Richard, taking courage from his first success, "is something I can do only wholly or not at all. But if your Majesty commands——"

"Choose a tale, then," said the King, motioning for perfect silence.

Grog's Boy, discovering himself suddenly in an unaccustomed rôle, glanced helplessly around.

"Tell him the tale of the Spanish bulls!" hissed Third Grog.

AT THE same time Grog's Boy again caught the glance of the lady who had helped him rescue the fallen buccaneer. She was whispering to a gentle-faced woman, who might have been her mother—and was. As her eyes met his she smiled and nodded her head. Sir Richard felt upon the instant that this lady wished him to do well, either for his own sake or for hers.

So he began the story of the Spanish Bulls. With a few vivid sentences he described the sufferings of the buccaneers on that terrible march from Chagres to Panamá.

"And when we came to the hill from which we saw the great ocean and the red roofs of Panama, your Majesty, we were as dead men stripped of all but skin and bone, but still ready for fight, if it please you."

Then he told how the Spaniards, who had been warned of their coming, sent out from the gates of the city what seemed like a great body of mounted men, sufficient at the first glance to trample the starved and weakened buccaneers under foot.

"But presently, your majesty, Harry Morgan, our chief, perceived the trick. A small body of Spanish cavalry was driving a vast herd of wild bulls upon us. At that we set up a cheer and a great laughing, for we were hungry men and most of us, ere we became buccaneers, were cattle-herders."

And when he told how they cut off the cavalry from the bulls, drove the Spaniards helter-skelter back to the city and made a great barbecue of slain cattle, King Charles lay back and shook with laughter.

"And after that?" cried the King. "Marry! Here is stuff merits the listening. Silence, gentlemen!"

Encouraged, Grog's Boy continued, telling how with full stomachs the buccaneers advanced upon the city gates and burst them after five hours of fighting, with the walls of the city vomiting smoke, fire and iron; how the fighting continued, every house a small fortress, through the city streets, and how Morgan ordered the burning of the Spanish ships in the bay, so that there should be no retreat either for his men or the Diegos!

Never was there a more rapt audience than the King and his court. And as young Sir Richard Warfield, buccaneer, told the tale, his eyes flashed, he swung his arms and was a very picture of Anglo-Saxon prowess. He forgot the King. His eyes, as he warmed to his story, became fixed upon the beautiful lady with the dark hair, earnest eyes and slightly parted red lips. She was listening as Desdemona to Othello.

The King must have noticed that the young buccaneer was unconsciously telling the tale directly to some person other than his royal self, for he turned his head slowly and found the destination of Grog's Boy's address.

At the same time the end of the adventure was reached, and the lady gave a start to find his Majesty looking curiously at her. The King laughed softly, then he laughed merrily.

"Marry!" he cried. "Here is a chance! Sir Buccaneer Warfield," turning to Grog's Boy, "make your *devoirs* to Mistress Laura Fernleigh, of Fernleigh Hall, who is even your neighbor in Warwickshire and much beloved by your cousin, Sir Gregory. Behold the roses of Fernleigh!" he added, pinching the lady's blushing cheek as she arose and curtseyed to Sir Richard.

"May they never fade," said the buccaneer, allowing his tongue to press its new-found talent, and he bowed with a grace that would have surprised him had he been able to see himself in a glass.

"And now, gentlemen," said the King,

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"here is a coil. What shall we do with that rascal Gregory? 'Twas our gift to his father; yet here is the son of a father who held his life cheap and ours dear. Can we forswear, yet not be forsworn?"

"Gad's life!" he broke off, slapping his leg. "What say we let them fight it out, and Mistress Laura, as the lady fair, shall wed the winner?"

While Mistress Laura rushed from the chamber in blushing panic, the gentlemen agreed that it would be folly in a King to settle a thing when there might be sport for a King in leaving it to settle itself.

"So be it, then," said Charles, with great gusto. "Sir Buccaneer, away with you to Warfield Towers and oust thy cousin, or know good reason. But mark ye, son of old Dickon Warfield, though ye may be a spitfire at skinning Spanish bulls, Gregory is a fire-eater with two-legged cattle. Gad's life! Could I but see the meeting!"

With that the King turned his back on the buccaneers and, after whispering a word to one of his gentlemen, began an animated conversation with the ladies.

AS THIRD GROG and Sir Richard were retreating for want of better or worse to do, the gentleman to whom his Majesty had whispered overtook them and handed the young buccaneer a bag full of gold coins. Sir Richard, who had been vainly scanning his surroundings for a last glimpse of the lady fair, felt a sudden wave of hurt pride.

"Sir," said he, "I am neither buffoon enough to be paid nor beggar enough to accept."

"It is the King's command," said the gentleman.

"Grab it, burn ye! Grab it!" hissed Third Grog in his companion's ear. "If 'tain't the cathedral chalice, happen it be a Peruvian ingot, an' who hath a better right to't than us?"

"Then," said Grog's Boy, remembering that money was sore needed if they were to find themselves adrift in England, "if I honor this command, I must even honor the other and advance upon my cousin."

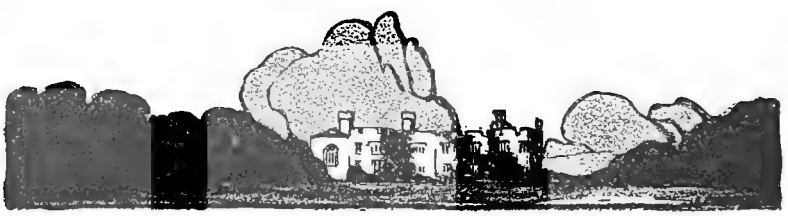
"That also is the King's expressed pleasure," said the gentleman, smiling.

Once away from Whitehall, Third Grog and Grog's Boy came to a standstill and faced each other.

"Well," said the young buccaneer, "What think ye o' the King, Grog?"

"Boy," said the old buccaneer, giving the money-bag a gentle poke with his fist, "that man be slippier than his decks!"

TO BE CONTINUED



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SHARK'S TEETH

By Carl S. Hansen

THERE had been no luck with Russ Lockyer, diver, in that all-night game at the Goat's Head. When the ancient clock struck seven he flung down his cards and went out into the November morning, clenching his fists.

The storm which had been lashing Dover all week was abating, and he was glad of that. In a little while, neither the Atlantic nor the North Sea would ebb or flow through the English Channel; then there would come an hour or two, perhaps three, of slack tide in which he and his fellow divers might go down to the *Singapore*, a ten-thousand tonner that lay out there under the curling waters. Would the wrecking company send them down? Russ looked at the dawn's swirling sky and hoped so, as he went across to the company's iron shed on the stone quay.

The wind tore at his stubborn mustache and narrowed his blue eyes as he turned the corner of the shed and stood by his three fellow divers. Pumpers, linemen and hosemen, to the number of nearly fifty, sprawled on the pier, hiding from the breeze, each man soberly sucking at his pipe and staring at the disquiet sea.

Wiley, the foreman of the wrecking-crew, was sweeping with his glass the foaming whitecaps outside the half-circle of cement that forms Dover's three miles of breakwater.

"A pipe by the fire looks better to me than that blamed white sea out there," he commented.

No one except Russ ventured a word.

"We haven't put in an hour this week; and I, for one, don't care whether the sea is white or black or green."

"Maybe not," answered the foreman, dryly; "but the company wants to see its boats again, and maybe our families won't mind seeing us back, either."

The others rose stiffly and disappeared, with the slow shamble and half-silence of men sent home from work.

"Been at it again, Russ?" asked Wiley.

Lockyer nodded, moodily.

"Why?"

"Because I'm an ass!"

"You're a decent sort of fellow, Russ; why don't you quit it?"

"I've got to! I've got to! Only, this half-time and no place to go plays hob with a man!"

Russ remained alone on the pier, watching the swells crash against the breakwater and burst into the dull sky, like rockets.

"Darned fool!" he exclaimed; "you ought to be a farm laborer, or a sailor in a fo'c's'le, where you'd be kept busy twelve hours a day and get a jolly good hiding to boot.

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A nice father, blowing in your twenty quid, meant to keep the kids from starving! And you promised her you'd quit it, too! By gad, if I ever catch you at it again, I'll run your —— head against the wall; see if I don't."

IT HAD all happened in the most natural way imaginable. Russ was away from his family, on a long job at Dover. The day before he had drawn a month's pay and was on his way to the post-office with it, when his landlady's dog, that had nosed after him, got into a fight and lost half an ear. Of course, Russ had to take him to a "pub" to wash the ear, and there some one asked him to have a game. He had hesitated, and compromised on drinks for stakes.

A shiver went through his lanky form as he thought of how he had played all night.

"A nice fix you're in, now, without a copper left! And Mary won't say a word, she won't; she'll only cry, she will. She ought to come down, on the next train, and curl your hair with a broom handle, she ought; then maybe you'd get some sense. And those old grannies of directors afraid for their boats—oh, rot. What's the use of blaming anybody but yourself? You're not civilized, you're not! You're only fit for bread and water and a treadmill! Where'll you get twenty pounds, now, and the diving season about ended? Where?"

A hand clutched his shoulder. He shuddered as he turned and faced a fisherman in a yellow oil-proof. It was Alec, captain of the *Sprite*, his greenish eyes glistening, the wind curling his tobacco-colored beard, that grew in ringlets like wool.

"You don't seem very busy," remarked Alec.

"No," grumbled Russ. "The company's afraid."

"Can diving be done in weather like this?"

"Why not?" shrugged Russ.

"Does that mean," asked Alec, steadily, "that you'd be willing to go down the Channel, to-night?"

"Um! I wouldn't for a farthing."

"What if it meant a fortune?"

"Talk sense! What does a fisherman know of fortunes?"

"Did you ever hear of the brig *Garibaldi*?"

"No."

"She was an old tub that left Spain, for Dover, thirty-two years ago, with a mixed cargo and some copper."

"Copper! Copper!" muttered Russ.

"She went down, there—" Alec swept the Channel with his arm— "one night."

"Copper, you said?" whispered Russ.

"I've found her!"

"How do you know it's the *Garibaldi*?"

"Never mind. I know! I know!"

Alec was raw-boned and long; but the diver forced him against the galvanized shed, out of the shouting breeze.

"How much copper?" he panted.

"Six or eight tons."

Russ's arm fell.

"I thought you spoke of a fortune!"

"Listen! It isn't the copper I'm after. There was a passenger on board who had done some queer business. He was wanted in a good many places, he was!"

"Wanted? For what?"

"In the King's English," said Alec, quietly, "for robbery. He had with him a casket full of stolen diamonds."

Russ started.

"Diamonds!"

"Stolen," went on Alec, feverishly; "I'll swear to that!"

"Alec, you're romancing."

THE diver's fingers trembled as he tried to light his pipe.

"If I was to tell you how a certain fisherman, alive to-day, was waiting for him in a boat, would it make you any surer?"

"It might, if I didn't happen to know he was a liar."

"I'm not telling any names," muttered Alec.

"What's your proposition?"

"What's the Government's usual proposition?"

Alec's lips curled at the word "Government."

"Why, the Government takes a third, gives the owners a third, and then the finders get a third."

"The owners!" sneered Alec. "Who are the owners of the *Garibaldi's* diamonds?"

"I don't know; you needn't look at me like that!"

"I'll tell you—the fishes down in the sea! These things were stolen, some here, some there, a generation ago. Hark you! Won't

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the clerks find owners for what we take out of the sea's graveyard?"

Russ was silent. Alec dug his long fingers into the diver's shoulders, fiercely.

"What right has the Government, or bogus heirs, to what we pick out of the shark's teeth?"

The other stirred uneasily and withdrew a longing gaze from the far-off sea.

"Well," he gulped, "I thought it might be something better than this."

"Better!" snarled Alec; "what better than for you to take half and me half, and both keep precious quiet?"

"I don't like the risk!"

"For the Lord's sake, he's afraid of the dark and of a bit of sea!"

"I'm no angel," said Russ, "but I've kept out of jail, so far."

"You needn't taunt me!" cried Alec. "I've never done time, except for smuggling, and every Dover fisherman with pluck would have done the same as I did."

"Sorry, Alec; I wasn't thinking of you. I was thinking of my wife—if I got caught."

"Precious little you think of her," grumbled Alec, "the way you carry on at the Goat's Head."

The diver winced. "Twenty pounds" flashed over and over in his brain.

"Why don't you make it regular?"

"Because I don't choose to. And suppose we don't find the diamonds? A pretty haul a third of six tons of copper would be for a crew and a risk like ours."

Russ moistened his lips.

"My diving-gear is aboard the company's tug."

Red on the sky flamed "Twenty Pounds!"

"There's Gorman's, who died of the D. T.'s Friday; it's at a pub, where I can pick it up for the night, and nobody be any the wiser."

"Pumpers and linemen!" whispered Russ.

"My gasoline engine for the pump, if you will, and myself and crew for the rest. Man, it's only thirty feet, and an hour's work!"

"It's fate!" muttered the diver.

AT SEVEN Russ went down in the dark to the dirty *Sprite*, that smelled to heaven of stale fish. Alec drew him to the stern, set him on the drag-net, and covered him with a tarpaulin; while a large-headed, coarse-featured "boy" of thirty, freckled, mottled, and red-haired, and a waxen-faced cripple with long arms and shrunken legs pushed off and set the sail.

With the tide running out furiously, the *Sprite* fled lightly through one of the gaps in the breakwater. The sky was overcast but the storm had gone down.

When, every once in a while, the red-haired hand found a spare moment, he was exceedingly friendly.

"Goin' to have a fine kitch," he grinned, "an' I'm cook. How d'you like yours served?"

"Ought to be served on china," observed Russ, "if it's as good as we expect."

"Pity there ain't no wine aboard, sime as we 'ad four months ago—the kind wot pies no dooty; eh, Cap'n?"

"Dan, hold your tongue," growled Alec, without vexation.

The pale cripple stumbled over Alec's feet and went aft, in the darkness, without a sound.

"Got no manners, Ugly?" roared the Captain. "Ugly's no good on his feet," he explained. "One leg's no leg at all, and the other ain't much better. But all torment itself couldn't take out of his hands what his fingers bite into."

"Do this pretty pair know anything about the diamonds?" whispered the diver.

"Do you think I'm a fool?"

"Then they mustn't see 'em come up."

"I'll leave that to you."

"I'll hand 'em to you, on the quiet, with my left hand, as I come up—if I find the box."

"You'll find it, all right," answered Alec, confidently, "if the *Garibaldi* went down as I think. The wind blew her over the shoals of the Vane, with a lift or two in the air, and then a drop, and in smashed her keel, and she sunk in a jiffy."

"They might have taken to the boats."

"And they mightn't. But the passenger couldn't. He was desperately hurt."

"You seem to know a good deal about this gentleman of the road."

"H'm!"

"It's none of my business, Alec."

"There was a rind of 'em," said Alec, calmly; "headquarters, Barcelona. They worked hand-in-glove with the police, in the regular old way, until a bit of civilization dawned on the place. Then there was a raid and some were shot fighting and some lived to be hanged. One chap—our chap—

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who acted as a sort of London agent, was desperately hurt, but got away; and, like a true buccaneer, he took along a nest-egg."

"How do you know all this?"

"He wrote me a line."

"Pals?"

"We had been, as kids. And I was at Dover, and he needed help at Dover. Don't be horrified; I wasn't in the gang. Not that I was too good," he laughed, frankly, "but that I lacked brains."

"You're a rummy sort," meditated Russ.

"But not the way you think. I'm no adventurer; just a bit of a gambler. I play for the stakes, even with the Government, now and then. Wouldn't you, with my chances?"

"I'm too hard a loser."

"Nonsense! You're as good a loser as me."

"Then that isn't very good," laughed Russ.

"I'm twenty years older than you, and haven't a gray hair yet; is that any answer?"

"You never played for anything big then, Alec."

"Haven't I, though!"

"I might make your hair curl, on the trip home, for the copper."

"Copper!" answered Alec, contemptuously. "Not while there are diamonds for stakes."

"That comes of having no family."

"Come; if you're a man of spirit, I'll play you for the diamonds!"

"Not I," answered Russ; "I want to quit it."

He stared intently at the sea.

"We're in the groove," said Alec, suddenly. "Dan! Ugly! Throw over the drag-net. Will you take the lead?"

"This last storm scoured a groove through the Vane," explained Alec, "and this morning we found it with our drag-net, fishing, and caught something. It didn't take me long to put two and two together and find what I've been looking for for years."

"Hello! Hello!" Russ's lead was recoiling with a wooden thud. "Stand fast, there!" He waited a moment, then called, "Let 'em go!"

Down came the sails and over went the anchor. Alec, at the engine, pulled the *Sprite* back over the course, winding in the drag-net in tow.

"Now I've got her again!" shouted Russ. "Pull her back. More—more. There! We're right over the deck of something."

Alec heaved a sigh.

THE diver looked sharply at the position of the *Sprite*. She was held by two long opposing pulls, the drag-net at the stern and the anchor far off the bow. He fished until his grappling-hook caught something at the bottom of the dark water, and he leaned over Alec, who was lashing a short wooden ladder to the starboard rail, and tied his line to a rung.

His arm touched something bulging in Alec's hip-pocket, and for a moment the rolling of the *Sprite* made him giddy. When he straightened, his fingers seemed cold and he paced a distance of three steps, like a lion in a small cage.

Dan and Ugly were rigging a block and tackle at the end of the boom and Russ answered Alec's voluble jokes vaguely. While he tried his pump with the engine he kept saying to the pump, "You never know! You never know!" After a bit he dropped into the cabin and a moment later stuck his head out resolutely.

"Oh, I say, Alec! Can you make me a cup of something hot, before I go down?"

"Surely can!" sang Alec, cheerily.

As Alec squeezed himself feet first through the narrow hatch, the diver deftly pulled the revolver out of his pocket. The coffee warmed him; his eyes glinted, and he gave crisp orders to the crew while pulling on his diving-dress.

For a time he tried the air critically; then Alec screwed on the glass plate and the diver walked down the ladder. The grappling-line slid through his hands as he went down in the darkness, pausing twice to get used to the pressure.

At the bottom something thrilled through his leaden sole, and he dropped on it. Instantly, as if he had turned on a switch, the night fell back and hemmed him in a sphere. His hair played stiffly in the wind that blew through the top of his helmet.

The outlines of the sunken brig were softly glowing, like a ship illuminated for a pageant. Rows of seaweed, six inches high, grew out of the cracks of the deck and waved tiny lights. Wonderingly, he stooped, picked a bit of fern and waved it over his head, a dazzling miniature Christmas tree.

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"The St. Elmo lights," he muttered; "millions of 'em, asleep; and my weight jarred 'em awake."

Setting his grappling-hook better, he went, buoyant as a balloon, through the irradiance, thrust back like a cork at the slightest surge of the sea. A few small fish sucked with their noses at his helmet-plate and ate at the sparkling bubbles that escaped from his exhaust-valve. Curious as children they went round this ponderous new creature, as ungainly as a whale and as helpless as a jelly-fish.

He put his leaden feet carefully down the companionway. Then a cloud rose, as if he had kicked an ash-heap. Every nerve shrank with loathing; his skin crawled; and he backed out of a swarm of shrimps, crushing them with his gloves and shooing them from his helmet like so many gnats. He twisted and dodged, but the shrimps sucked in after him, in the strange way everything follows the diver, until they covered him.

Under deck was a darkness the land never knows. He heard the stir of a monster asleep as he crept on, his fingers extended before him, working and feeling like the antennæ of insects. He went aft over the sand-strewn floor, handling everything, remembering everything. Then his feet stopped.

A barnacled square box crumbled under his touch. He chuckled as he ran his thumbs over the necks of some bottles. There would be wine on the return. He let the bottles lie and went on. Bits of the box fell in behind him, like dogs following their master, and rubbed dumbly against his legs at every stride.

CAME two greenish, gleaming eyes. He backed against the side of the brig with the feeling that the air-pump had gone wrong and the picture of a monster conger-eel burned into his brain. He drew his knife and waited an eternity of five minutes.

Then the pump seemed to work again and he heaved a sigh of relief. The eel had looked to be forty feet long, most of which he was willing to allow to imagination and magnification under water. But it did not return, and he went on.

Still no copper. He backed, touching everything, picking up and leaving on the companionway his armful of bottles. Then forward under the deck. Lumber that had at first floated against the ceiling had settled down into the gangway, rotten and barnacled. He fell through some of this muck, under the hatch, striking his knees painfully.

Following his lines back to the companionway, he went on deck and signaled for a rope. In a moment the men above had ripped off the rotten hatchway hood. He sank into the opening with their line, and up went a black bar of copper as unwillingly out of its lair as a fish on a hook.

Six of these bars made a ton, though they weighed less in the water. Sometimes he had to drag them bodily, but he had the grip and shoulders of the big-knuckled man of forty, and tugged and swore until they moved. At every turn he was bumped by growing quantities of wreckage, which got in his way as children get in the way of a workman who comes to do repairs at their home.

After a time, his air-line and life-line, which had been swept to and fro, curled steadily into a deepening half-moon and tugged a warning at his helmet. When he scrambled out of the hatchway he became a plaything for the turning tide and clung to everything, as in a gale. The tiny St. Elmo lamps had gone out, but they woke fitfully at his tread. Once he was swept off and had to be hauled up to the *Sprite*, where he caught hold of the grappling-rope and went down again to the rail, whence he ploughed his way stubbornly to the cabins.

Many coats of paint had remarkably preserved the cabins, but none of the doors would open without a crowbar.

"A rummy go," he laughed; "jimmying a burglar's own door!"

IN THE third cabin he went on his hands and knees, as in the others, and felt everywhere. Nothing. He stood up and groped over the berths, and touched a skeleton. It stirred, as everything did.

He felt sharply until he found a round little thing, out of which he shook a bone, and then put a ring into his diving-pocket. The skeleton came to pieces, while he eagerly searched the berth, and the pieces went sailing round and round.

And then he found it. Barnacled, as sometimes one stuccoes a jewel-box with shells.

Russ backed out, holding the box be-

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tween his knees, while he tied a string around his dozen bottles and gave the signal to haul them up.

His lines had curled into the outer rim of the half-moon and the tide was flowing like a strong river. He fought his way to the mooring-rope and climbed it with tired relief. Now his hand touched the ladder and he went up, easily enough, until his shoulders were out. He had not meant to yield the box, but Alec reached down, with the warning gesture of a confederate, and he did so.

Then the ladder fell and he shot down into the darkness. Even as the ladder struck the sand, his feet still on one rung and his hands gripping another, he had a feeling that the fall was not altogether unexpected. The regular click of the pump was gone. He pulled at his life-line and it floated down to him, like a rope of seaweed.

"Seven minutes to live!"

That was the thought that flashed through his brain. It was what he and his fellows had often said would be the limit for the diver, at the bottom of the sea, with no more air than in his rubber clothes. Perhaps only five, for some air had been lost in coming down.

Instinctively he threw off his seventy-five-pound belt and, as he tried to unbuckle his leaden shoes, the ladder loosened in the sand and he clung to it blindly. The ladder rose with him obliquely, the tide sweeping him on.

Then he felt a bump and was nearly jerked off his ladder. He remembered the mooring-rope, still tied to a rung on the sunken *Garibaldi*, and untied it with feverish haste.

Again the tide bore him on, hugging the ladder, his life- and air-lines floating and trailing like long braids of hair. Still he did not rise high enough, and he kicked at his shoes until one came off. He went higher; but now the copper spiral in his air-line began to sink and to pull his head down, and the air in his helmet squeezed into his bootless leg, so that he swung upside down dizzily, like an inverted witch on a broom. He tried paddling to right himself, but the spiral was too heavy. He was beginning to choke.

Slowly his head rose, of its own accord, and he had the feeling that he was coming on all right, in some incomprehensible way, when he was stopped again. Then he understood; his life-line had fouled under water.

Desperately he pulled himself back through the water and found his line tangled with another line, running obliquely. Up this he raced, the air returning to his helmet with the maneuver.

Then he found his fingers madly working off his helmet-plate, while he clung to the rope and gasped. The *Sprite* lay seventy-five feet ahead, and his floating life-line had fouled her anchor rope.

LANTERNS were swinging over the side of the *Sprite*. He saw the derisive smile on the cripple's pallid face and the dancing of the red-haired, jovial Dan. Then they gathered in their arms the bottles which he had sent up, and went below.

Russ set his teeth hard, wound a leg around the anchor-rope, and sawed feverishly at his lines, cutting them at his waist. He put away his knife and pulled hand over hand along the anchor-rope to the bow of the *Sprite*.

As he was slowly drawing himself up, Ugly hobbled up the little fo'c's'le and saw him. Silently, as he did everything, the cripple picked up an ax and rushed with the weapon upraised to kill this strange monster that threatened him out of the sea.

But Ugly's hairy arms were as long as the ax-handle and, as he swung down, he overreached the rope with the ax and pulled himself off his feet. With a leap, Russ scrambled to the deck and, before the cripple could rise, his heavy shoe crashed into his temple.

Down clattered the ax into the fo'c's'le. Dan stuck out his head; then, with a yell, he sprang nimbly out and went for Russ, ax in hand. Now came the good of the diver's helmet. The bow was too small for far-off, smashing blows. By fighting in close, it was only once or twice that Dan was able to hit the head-piece with more than the handle.

There was no time for the diver to open his dress and get the revolver, as he had planned. It was the mere instinct of hatred that made him crowd Dan with his long and heavy diver's knife.

Dan kept up a furious noise. Shrimps shook from Russ's suit and squirmed under their feet as they slipped and tumbled

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about, Russ terribly anxious to be done with him.

Then his knife caught in the left of Dan's neck. Dan roared, dropped his ax, and stepped back to the rail. Like a bull with his horns, the diver caught him under the jaw, and Dan disappeared over the rail. In a moment he rose, his arms up, his red head bobbing, the black sea washing a red stain from his neck.

"Cap'n, for God's sake! I can't swim!"

Russ darted a glance at the running tide; then he turned his back and walked aft. Of them all, he feared Alec most. Why had not Alec appeared? It worried him and, as he worried, he tried to slip the revolver around under his diving suit, so that he could cut it free with his knife.

Even as he began, something struck him heavily on the chest, staggered him, and crashed at his feet. An alarm-clock smashed on his helmet and a cup flew into it and cut his lip. A quick fire of knives, pots, crowbars, bottles, a hammer, a plane, chisels, blocks, belaying-pins, dishes, rained at him from the darkness ahead, many striking him. It was a furious onslaught, with no shelter and no time to think.

He stood stiffly, unable to dodge, glad that he was padded with double underwear, a sweater, his working-clothes, and diving-suit. Dimly he saw through it. The captain had heard Dan's cry and, discovering the loss of his revolver, was trying to inflict a damaging blow while keeping under cover.

A mallet shot into Russ's shoulder and out of the darkness leaped Alec with a cleaver. Round spun the helmet, which the diver had now learned to use as a weapon; the copper spiral in the short, dangling air-line cut across Alec's eyes, and then Russ closed on him with a growl.

THEY fell down the hatchway, Russ's helmet crashing into the copper bars. Capriciously the unevenly piled bars gave first one, then the other, the upper hand. Russ protected his face by boring it into Alec's chest. Alec's head bumped over the copper spoils, his cleaver striking at the helmet. Alec was chewing at the diver's thick clothes and reaching, against reason, for his protected throat. At one time, the open plate-hole in the helmet ground cruelly into the captain's face, and their noses touched, while Alec vainly bit and spat and clawed.

And then came a lessening of the struggle, a feeling of faintness at the smell of something warm. Russ rolled over and sat up, a wet knife in his hand, watching something quiet in the darkness. Eons rolled by while he sat there quietly and tried to set things in orderly sequence.

Then he shivered and crept on deck, took off his helmet, leaden shoe and diving-dress and flung them, one by one, into the sea. That reminded him of Dan. He, too, in his turn, swung a lantern far over the side of the *Sprite* and listened.

Forward he went to the bow and studied the caved-in head of Ugly. Back he bore his light to the hatchway where the captain lay on a heap of black copper, his fingers twitching slightly, his brown beard reddened, his eyes without fire.

He sat by the hatchway, lantern in hand, unstrung in limb, trying to think; but all he could do was endlessly to revisualize the scene. Here lay Alec, on the bow lay Ugly, and somewhere overboard was Dan; overboard was Dan, forward Ugly, and here Alec; all dead. They had carefully planned to cheat him of his share of the treasure, and here they were, all dead, and he alone alive, saved by the very armor they had thought would end him.

How should he explain all this, when he reached Dover? How *could* he explain a cargo of copper, two men slain and one drowned; he alone with a treasure-boat and a tale of three dead men? When he looked at Alec for an answer, the same barbarous taunt came.

HE DID not know, until the next day, that he was bruised, wrenched, racked; nor that he stared from sky to water, listening to the wind with fine ears and dull understanding. Forward he found one of his bottles of wine and in Alec's cabin some bread and cold ham, which he ate greedily.

Then his fingers brought out of its hiding-place a dripping, barnacled box, which he opened and shut, still greedily eating. He put the box into the little boat and followed it with a tarpaulin and Alec's cleaver.

Impatiently he poked a last morsel of bread into his mouth, lowered the boat over the side, cut a neat hole in the *Sprite* at her water-line with the cleaver, and then flung it back to the hatchway, where Alec lay amid his copper treasure. He waited a

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short time to make certain the *Sprite* was filling rapidly and would soon sink. Then he tugged sturdily at the oars, pulling with wind and tide to Dover.

Russ staggered up the lonely street to a house on a hill, shrouded in darkness. He went up-stairs, locked his door, lit his lamp and fell across his bed.

Some hours later, he opened the barnacled box. His blue eyes danced, then narrowed as he thought of Alec, then danced again as he looked. Now rose in a whisper the cry that had filled his soul with intoxication. Hours of reiteration had robbed it of its barbarous exultation, its wild pride and scorn.

"And that fellow wanted me to play him for the diamonds!"

DOWN THE RIVER

A tale of the Ohio in the Old Days

By G. W. OGDEN

IN THE old days when Pittsburg was just a promising trading-post on the far western edge of civilization, undesirable characters were not punished by sending them to jail. Instead, they were sent "down the river." And down the river might mean either the redemption or the complete ruination of a man, depending altogether on the quality of the material launched upon the perilous adventure.

Generally the sentence meant the enlistment of the culprit in the crew of some trader who carried goods between New Orleans and the far northern post. Frequently these impressed boatmen deserted along the way and joined other outcasts of their own type. These roving refugees, savage and cruel as the hard surroundings of their lives could not help making them, preyed upon the slender commerce of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. That was in the day of the flatboat, or "broadhorn," before keelboats, even, were tried out against the stiff currents, and long before the steamboat had developed beyond a dream.

There was only Pittsburg on the north, and New Orleans on the south, along the length of this long water-road. Cincinnati was not thought of, Louisville had not been conceived, and St. Louis was but a French trading-post in the black wilderness, far above the point where the Ohio and the Mississippi joined. But there was the need of commerce to be served, even then, with good profit in the bold adventures up and down that perilous way. So there was no lack of merchants willing to risk their lives and their fortunes on the river, in the face of the constant danger of Indians and pirates, and the insidious slow fevers which wasted a man away to the bones.

Jep Tolliver was nothing more than a worthless man, such as there had been countless droves of before his day, such as live unnumbered as the sands everywhere in all ages. For nobody ever takes the trouble to count them, and would not be paid for his labor if he should. Jep was a man with the weakness of liquor in his eyes. He put in his time around the traders' stores, playing his fiddle for the entertainment of the rough men who gathered there from near and far. Jep could play a jig and dance it at the same time, and the more liquor he put inside of him the more diverting his antics became, so he usually had a skinful of it, such as it was. For his meals, Jep depended upon his long-suffering and overworked wife, who did the washing for such of the inhabitants as felt the need of it from time to time.

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He was worthless and o'nery, and harmless in his way, in so far as violent deeds and trespasses upon the rights of others were concerned. The only time that he could be induced to put his hand to a piece of work was when the fiddle could not wheedle a drink out of anybody, which sometimes happened when there were no strangers in the village. But when whisky was the reward, Jep would tug and heave among the barrels and bales like a badger, displaying strength that would have been the fortune of a river-man among a refractory or mutinous crew.

So it was Jep's misfortune to misapply his power on a storekeeper who refused him a drink one day, and who tried to kick him out when he insisted upon having it on account of the lively hours he had made with his fiddle in that place in days gone by. In the mix-up the storekeeper's neck was twisted out of joint. When Jep realized that he had killed him, he tried to get away into the woods. They caught him because he stopped to tell his wife good-by.

Witnesses of the encounter bore Jep out in his story that the storekeeper was the aggressor. But, taking into consideration the comparative values of the men, the public verdict was that Jep was a nuisance anyway, and that he always had been a nuisance. The town would be better off without him, and so they voted to send him down the river.

THERE was no boat ready to go, and nobody would have taken him into a crew if there had been, so they decided to set Jep off on an expedition of his own. One contributed an old skiff, others flour, bacon and the slender necessities of life in such quantities as were judged sufficient to carry a man to New Orleans if he worked hard and slept little —very little indeed.

Jep's weeping wife was there, begging them to allow her to go. That being denied her, she handed them Jep's fiddle, requesting them to let him have that for company along the lonely journey. Jep himself was dazed. He sat with his head drooped over, crushed by the culminating disgrace of his disgraceful and trifling life. When they had his boat freighted they ordered him into it. Jep stood shaking himself a little as a man throwing off the chill of sleep. Then he kissed his wife, for the first time in many a year.

"Susie, I've been a bad one to ye," said he, "but I promise ye if I ever come back, I'll come back a man."

"If you ever come back we'll hang you," sternly warned a merchant. "Pile in there now, and git out o' sight!"

"Will you let me give him this?" requested a young trader, stepping forward with an ax. "He'll need it before he gets through. I've been down the river. I know."

"Throw it in the stern there," said one. The young man—his name was Peter Ball —went to the water's edge and stowed his gift in the boat. Then he stepped to where Jep sat between the rowlocks, the oars in hand.

"Good-by, Jep," said he, giving him his hand.

Jep looked up at him, tears in his eyes.

"I've been a bad one, Peter," said he. "But I tell ye now, if ye ever see me ag'in ye'll see a man."

SO JEP the outcast pushed off, and they watched him down the river until the Autumn haze blurred him, and the distant bend cut him from their sight. His wife went back to her wash-tub, weeping. True, her load was lighter for Jep's going, but her poor, work-worn heart was lonely and heavy. She looked at the place on the wall where Jep's fiddle used to hang, remembering only what Jep was before the liquor took him from her entirely.

"He was a good man," she murmured; "a dear, kind, good man!"

It was then early Autumn. Jep, laboring at his oars, made headway into the South. He passed the rapids of the Ohio where Louisville now stands, knowing by that mark that he was half-way to the Mississippi. He hadn't seen an Indian; nothing had interfered with his flight, and, so far as the serenity of weather and peace of the forest were concerned, it might have been a pleasure journey. Jep experienced more sober days together than in years before. His mind was coming out of its debased lethargy.

He began to suffer the upbraidings of conscience. And so, with his pangs and his pains, he rowed on, passing at last into the Mississippi, where, on his second night upon that stream, he was made captive by a band of river-pirates as he sat eating his supper beside his fire.

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Jep's manhood and courage were still more or less in shreds from his long years of debauchery, and he made such a chicken-hearted plea for his life that the river pirates despised him.

"Come along here," said the Captain, a huge, great-whiskered man, taking Jep by the ear as he knelt before him. "You talk like a woman. Maybe you'll do for a cook if you ain't good for nothing else."

They towed Jep's boat to the island where they had built huts and otherwise prepared for the coming Winter, and when they unpacked it they found his fiddle. Whisky was plentiful with the river thieves, for they had plundered many a barrel of it from the New Orleans-St. Louis boats during the Summer. They gave Jep a pannikin of it to steady him up. With the familiar touch of the liquor, Jep's artificial courage flamed up in his poor old shadow of a heart. He took up his fiddle and played them a tune. They applauded him for it, serving more whisky.

Then Jep played a jig and danced it, capering grotesquely in the light of the leaping bonfire. That won them entirely. They embraced Jep and swore him in as a comrade, vowing that they never would part with him.

"Now, tell us what it might be that you up and done that made 'em send you off down the river all alone?" asked the genial Captain, slapping Jep's back and roaring a tremendous laugh.

Jep, brought back to the gravest business of his life by the challenge, dropped from his pinnacle of alcoholic hilarity for a moment. He shrank away from them, his jaw moving like an epileptic's.

"My God, I killed a man, I killed a man!" said he.

At that they laughed long and loud. "Fiddled him to death, hey?" said one.

"No," said Jep, recovering his false courage, "I fiddled and he danced. He danced till he wore his legs off, clean up to his body, and then he starved to death 'cause he couldn't walk to the table."

AND in that way Jep made himself welcome in that outcast crowd, taking a fiddler's place, which in such society is not at all exalted. Thereafter Jep's duties by day were those of cook, and by night he was the entertainer. He fiddled and he jigged until his heart was sick of fiddling and jigging. When he pleaded either weariness or indisposition the Captain had a jovial method of reviving his spirits.

It was nothing else than this: Filling a half-pint tin cup with whisky, the Captain would stand it on Jep's bare head, place him twenty paces off and shoot at it with his rifle. If he missed the cup, Jep was at liberty to drink the contents, and if he hit it, which he usually did, Jep was refreshed with a bath of ardent spirits on the outside.

The result of this innocent diversion on the Captain's part was that Jep grew to have a revulsion of feeling toward the scent of whisky that all the temperance lectures and medical disquisitions in the world could not have instilled. He grew to loathe it, to despise it.

They let him alone in his peculiarity, as they defined it. If a man didn't have sense enough to drink whisky, he was missing that much out of life, and it wasn't any of their concern at all. Just so long as Jep fiddled and jigged, and baked their bread and cooked their meat, they had no complaint to make against his morals.

And as the weeks passed and Winter drew on, Jep's cure became absolute. He was as completely weaned from whisky as if he never had tasted it; better than that, perhaps, for he had no desire to taste it. His flabby fatness went out of his face, the seams disappeared from beneath his eyes, his muscles hardened, his eyes cleared. Jep Tolliver was coming back into his birthright. He was getting back to the starting-point and becoming a man.

And about that time, up the river in Pittsburg, Peter Ball was freighting a flatboat for a cruise to New Orleans. His plan, which he had followed for several seasons, was to start south late in November, traveling ahead of the ice. In New Orleans he would spend a month or two, starting back in time to reach the Ohio about the time the last ice was out of it. In that way he would make it back home with a big cargo of goods along in April or May. It was a risky business, but Peter always had found it profitable.

An amazing lot of stuff went down the river in those days; furs, whisky, lead, powder, Canadian goods, and even farm-produce which was not of perishable character. For New Orleans was a good market, and the river-route was nearer than the journey

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by sea, without the long haul overland to reach it, which would have made commerce with the West, such as Pittsburg was then, out of the question. So Peter Ball loaded his seventy-foot flatboat with a miscellaneous assortment of wares, his eight men poled away from the landing, and the three-months' voyage began. There was a nip of frost in the air, and the nights were cold enough to make ice in pails of water, but Peter believed himself to be a good month ahead of the mush-ice which would block the river behind him.

But the middle of December found Peter ice-bound below the mouth of the Ohio. It had locked him up there in a night while the flatboat was tied to the shore, and there he was, all of his calculations upset, blocked until Spring, or a Winter breaking-up, should set him free to pursue his journey to the South. And there the outlawed men who had Jep a prisoner among them found the boat, its crew and its valuable cargo.

It was the method of the river thieves to rob one man and sell the plunder to another. There was no lack of traders willing to buy from them, for the morals of the times were elastic. No man in the river trade ever stopped to look into the history of goods offered to him at a bargain. For that reason the pirates did not overlook, or slight, any sort of merchandise. If there was no market down the river for it, there was certain to be one in the other direction.

Most of Peter Ball's men were slain in defense of the cargo when the pirates attacked them at night. Those who escaped perished in the woods, it was believed. At least they never made it back to Pittsburg, and never were heard of again.

Peter himself was captured. Not that they wanted him, but because he fought his way among them in the face of their fire, his rifle clubbed, till Jep Tolliver, recognizing him, laid hold of him and threw him on his back. Peter was a big man, and a strong one, and the strength of desperation was added to his own. It was a struggle between them before Jep laid him along —a struggle to lift the outcast fiddler in the estimation of his captors mightily. Jep finally got his mouth near enough to Peter's ear to make himself known without betraying the secret to the outlaws, and Peter at once made a show of submission.

Rye whisky was one of the staples of trade down the river in those days, the Monongahela country being famous for it even then. It passed in barter the same as gold. Peter carried a great deal of whisky, that being a cold-weather cargo, and the pirates at once laid themselves out to celebrate the capture in a long carousal.

WHEN they were sufficiently warmed up to it they gathered around the fire to consider the question of Peter. Would his people back in Pittsburg pay any ransom for him? asked the Captain. Peter said they would not, because they hadn't any to pay. There was nobody there but his wife, and their entire wealth was represented in the lost boat and cargo. Very well then, said the Captain, they'd have to shoot him, for they couldn't run the risk of having a man in camp who might bury a keg of powder under the fire some night.

Jep came forward with a question of privilege. The man was his captive, by all the laws of battle, and he needed somebody to give him a hand with the work around camp. Let him work his way through till Spring, suggested Jep, and then turn him loose to find his way back home if he could. They were not favorable to the proposal.

"He can't fiddle, and he can't jig," objected the Captain. "He says he can't, and you don't need no help. You're as stout as any two of us. Don't you reckon we seen the way you walled that big feller?"

So it was decreed that Peter must die. Jep, by hard pleading and a good deal of fiddling and jigging, gained a respite from immediate execution. They agreed, out of consideration for Jep, to put it off until morning. With that they lashed Peter hand and foot and threw him into one of the cabins, leaving him to live or die unprotected upon the ground.

It turned out that the pirates all got as drunk as Jep hoped they would. Jep began making his preparations for flight by hastily packing two small sacks of food and selecting two rifles and ammunition. When the last man of them tumbled over in drunken stupor, forgetful of the prisoner who was condemned to die, Jep set Peter free and they began their flight toward the North.

That was a Winter of unusual severity. It had begun early, and the hope of the two men was that the weather would hold so that the river-ice would give them a

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smooth road and good traveling. Ahead of them there lay at least a thousand miles of forest, uninhabited save for roving bands of Indians. For food along the tedious slow journey they would have to rely, when the small portion which they carried was gone, on what they could shoot. They had no concern for the outlaws from whom they had fled, as the chances were that the others would make no effort to pursue. But the greater peril of Indians was ahead of them, together with the suffering which they must endure on account of insufficient clothing. For they had left the pirates' camp slenderly provided, not daring to run the risk of hunting for extra clothing and shoes, nor caring to encumber themselves with the additional weight.

Peter was not a woodsman, and Jep's knowledge of life in the open wilds was insufficient for what awaited them. But they cheered themselves with the thought that the river lay there, a great white road before them all the way. All they need do was follow it, and struggle on.

For many days all went well with them. Then the food ran out, and their progress was held back discouragingly by the excursions into the woods after game. Snow fell abundantly, and the larger animals, such as depended upon the low-growing herbage for sustenance, had moved back to the higher lands along the river, away from the thick forest where the snow fell undisturbed by wind, covering everything completely.

True, the river's way was plain before them, and the ice was thick under their feet. But the snow packed into their boots and galled their feet; melted on the leather and soaked it, laming them painfully. At night they crouched, aching and sore, in the shelter of boughs which they cut and arranged into rude and inadequate windbreaks, the solace of a fire their only cheer.

They had no additional clothing to supply the warmth which exertion gave them on the tramp, and sleep under such conditions was a gamble with death. A man might sleep, never to wake with the morning sun again. So they tried to take turnabout at it, dozing as they sat, backs against the boles of trees, paying as dearly for life as men ever paid for it.

While one labored through troubled dreams, in which the torture of cold was always present, the other heaped the fire with the branches of fallen trees, of which there always was plenty to be found, for it was a forest through which fire had not swept. Then with morning, on again, weak, chilled, almost ready to lie down in the snow and give up the fight.

Through it all Jep was the unceasing marvel of Peter. He had not been able to carry away his fiddle, but he still had his song, and he marched singing it, cheering his comrade's drooping heart, the long days through. Hardship did not seem to touch him. Its pains did not cause him to grumble or flinch. He made a joke out of everything, taking upon himself twice his rightful share of the work, getting along, somehow, with much less sleep than Peter had, holding out strongly through the hopeless days that they would make it, safe and whole, into Pittsburg and astonish the natives by the deed.

PETER couldn't make out the change in Jep. It was something he never had expected, something which appeared impossible to make out of the whining wretch who pushed off from the landing at Pittsburg four months before. He thought about it a great deal as they toiled northward. In his troubled sleep the problem of Jep's rehabilitation came and recurred like an unsolved sum.

Peter got a gleam of the truth one day, as he dragged himself along, Jep's sustaining arm around him. Jep was carrying Peter's rifle and all the ammunition—such as they had left—and his eyes were as bright and strong as if he never had wallowed in dissipation. Peter looked into his cheerful face, gaunt with hunger and suffering.

"I know what it is now, Jep," said he. "You're a man again. Your soul's come back to you!"

Jep smiled.

"I'm on the way to it, thank the Almighty," said he.

There was more snow. It lay three feet deep on the ice of the river, binding their legs in their struggle against it. Then it grew colder, making the going better, but the nights hideous. As that was not a country where pine and cedar grew, they had not even the comfort of leafy boughs between them and the wind, or anything to make a bed of upon the snow. Try making a wind-shield and an overhead shel-

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ter with only bare branches out in the woods some snowy, blustering night. Then you will understand what Jep and Peter had to face. Night after night that was their lodging, the wind roaring through the creaking, frozen branches of the forest. Back propped against a tree, some twigs and sticks beneath him on the snow, each wayfarer took his turn at sleep, the space of the fire between him and the boundary line of eternal night.

Food became a question as they fared on. All the birds and beasts appeared to have left the river-region. They made long, wearisome trips into the snow-bound woods, hoping to shoot a deer. Sometimes they sighted one, but both were poor hands with the rifle, and they wasted a good deal of their ammunition. Once they killed a raccoon, but for the greater part their food was rabbits and squirrels, and only enough of that to keep their hearts strong enough to hold the door shut upon their straining souls.

Peter's strength failed him one afternoon. As he sank down in the snow he begged Jep to leave him and carry the news to his wife at home. Jep picked Peter up in his arms, wondering how a man could live with so little flesh upon his bones, and carried his comrade to the shelter of a bank, where he made a fire. Then he took off Peter's worn boots, chafing his frosted feet before the blaze.

Luck was with Jep that evening. He shot a turkey as it sat in a tree, calling raucously to the flock which scudded away at Jep's approach. It seemed that the fowl was mocking his marksmanship, and it gave Jep a double satisfaction when he brought it down.

That feast renewed Peter's spirit and strength somewhat. But when they went forward in the morning it was without Peter's gun. Peter was leaning on Jep's arm, halting on his swollen feet.

Jep had lost count of the days, and he was not familiar with any of the landmarks along the way. So he had no means of knowing how far they were from Pittsburg. Two days previously Peter, who had been down the river several times, had recognized certain rocks, or had believed he had recognized them. Afterward he was not certain, for the snow changes a landscape so that even familiar objects are sometimes unknown. But they must be within two or three hundred miles of it, Jep believed, for they had been on the way a long time, and at the start they had made amazingly long journeys each day.

At any rate, by carrying and helping, Peter managed to hold out five days longer. Then he began raving, and refused to stir when Jep was ready to resume the march. Jep's ammunition was down to the last ball, yet he feared to leave Peter, delirious and alone in the woods, while he went to seek some creature to spend his one shot upon. Peter might wander off to a fate even worse than that which seemed in store for them both. For there is some comfort in dying in company with one's kind.

THEY had been fortunate in their camping-place the night before, having found a projecting ledge, with a south exposure, beneath which the ground was bare of snow, and dry. A quantity of leaves had blown and banked there, and Peter, in his illness, had a better bed than he had enjoyed since they began the long march homeward. As the sun mounted it began to thaw a little, warming the nook beneath the rock almost to comfort. Peter slept, and Jep, taking up his rifle with eager hand, crept away to see what he might kill.

He had not proceeded far when he came full upon a herd of deer cropping the hazel-tips of a thicket, into which they pushed hungrily, with so much noise that his own clumsy approach was unheard. Jep put in a double charge of powder as he shielded himself behind a tree, and rammed his precious bullet home. He was not more than fifty yards from the herd, but his heart strained and quivered so that he was afraid he would miss.

Luck, rather than skill, was with him, and he brought to earth a doe. Too weak to carry the carcass to camp, he cut off a part of it and hurried back. Peter looked upon the food apathetically, and only by dint of persuasion did Jep finally prevail upon his comrade to eat when he had broiled a steak over the coals. Then Peter slept again, and Jep, stripping off the deer's hide, brought it back and spread it over his comrade, sitting down near him to wait.

There was meat enough to last several days, and there was the deerskin to add to Peter's boots when he was able to go ahead. The situation looked promising, save for

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the fact that the bullet-pouch was empty. Jep even searched the carcass of the deer in the hope that he might find the ball which had brought it down. But in that he failed. There was powder enough for a few charges, but in all his slender trappings there was not a piece of metal that would serve for, or could be shaped into, a ball.

Jep waited there two days. Still Peter did not mend. At times, when his mind was clear, he piteously urged Jep to go on and save himself. On the third morning, which broke clear and warmer with promise of a thaw, Jep cut off pieces of the deerskin and bound them around Peter's feet. Then he slung what there was left of the meat into his pouch at his back, stood his useless rifle against the rock, picked the protesting Peter up in his arms and headed again into the North.

Peter was better, in a way. Not that he was sick, in the first place. He was used up. The fire had gone out in him, all but a little spark. The fatigue and the constant strain had sprung his mind and he had to fumble and grope after the dim threads of consciousness. He lay against Jep's breast muttering incoherent things.

So they started on the last wearisome, hopeless-looking stage of the long walk, all of the load on the shoulders of Jep, the outcast from among men.

Days passed, Jep toiling on through the snow, which became slush, then running water, under his feet. At night he watched beside his comrade, keeping the fire alive. How he himself lived was a question which no man who ever heard the stern story could make answer to. But he lived, and Peter's shred of life clung, like a tendon to a bone, to his gaunt body.

On into the North they snailed. The snow melted, and mornings offered a glare of smooth ice on the river for Jep to find footing on. It made the going slower, for he was careful not to fall with Peter, knowing that neither ever would rise again if he should get a hurt.

The food gave out, even that which Jep had reserved for Peter alone. Where he was, how far from succor, from the warmth of shelter, from the medical attention which Peter needed so sorely, Jep had no notion. All that he knew was that he would drive himself onward until his feet would no longer obey his will. Then he would cover Peter with his own coat, and die like a man.

How wonderful is the tenacity of human life! The human frame, maimed, torn with balls, pierced with bayonets, twisted and seared by fire, cherishes still the little spark within its inmost chamber, and life flames triumphant above the wreck.

Jep Tolliver pushed on, his burden in his arms. How long he was on that last stage of the journey he never knew, and no man ever knew.

But snow had fallen again, and it was soft under foot when he came to the landing at Pittsburg one mid-afternoon, his gaunt burden against his breast. His arms were stiffened about Peter's body; they were forced to unfold them, like clasps of steel, before they could release him. It seemed as if Jep Tolliver had locked them there with the last force of his invincible will. When they took Peter's weight out of his arms, Jep Tolliver fell, face downward, in the snow. He had paid his debt to society, and had come back to it a man.

WHEN the ice broke from the river in the Spring a flatboat, urged along with heavy sweeps, followed it down. In the boat were Peter Ball, commander; Jep Tolliver, his partner and lieutenant; and ten well-armed men. They carried no cargo.

Nothing much was ever heard of what took place down the river between the pirates and Peter Ball's crew, for most of the men in the expedition were Canadian boatmen, and they went their roaming way. But it was well known that Peter Ball and his partner reached New Orleans with two flatboats, well freighted. And if all the goods were not of the cargo which Peter set out with in the first instance, barrel for barrel and bale for bale, it was not the custom of the time to ask questions about such purely personal affairs.

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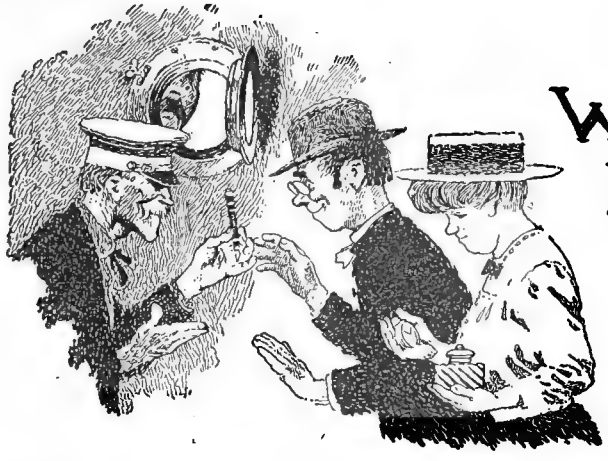

A SALT-WATER FLIRT

by Athol Forbes

"THERE'S an ugly little devil on the quay says he wants to see you," said the mate, thrusting his head through the open skylight of the cabin wherein slumbered noisily the skipper of the brig *Rising Sun* of the port of Gorleston. It was a hot afternoon and Captain Cutting was enjoying his after-dinner snooze.

"Eh? Wot's that?" he grumbled and re-adjusted his position in his chair.

The mate thrust in his head and again gave the information with sundry exhortation to wake up.

"Wants to see me? Wot's 'e like?" queried the sleepy man.

"Looks as if he might be a pickpocket; says he's a friend o' yours. Dressed in black with a white choker. He looks like some one who 'as come to break the news of a death."

"Wot's his name? You didn't arsk? Well, go and arsk," said the skipper testily.

The skipper was snoring cheerfully when the mate returned.

"He says his name is H. Price Morgan, and I got him to write it down, seein' you're so perticular."

The confirmation of this in the shape of a leaf torn from a pocketbook fluttered down and settled on the Captain's lap, together with an ordinary visiting-card.

Cutting examined the strange handwriting and the card.

"Morgan," he muttered. "He's soon got his name printed."

"Had it already printed and I made him write it down as well, to see if they agreed," came from the skylight.

"Quite right. Why didn't you tell him I was ashore?"

"I did."

"Well?"

"He said I was a liar. Oh, I'll dot him one for that presently. I'm not going to let a little Welshman insult me."

"Wot place do he hail from?" asked the skipper sourly.

"Ystradfodfy," replied the mate.

"Don't make that noise again, Mr. Murray, if you please," interrupted Cutting. "It's bad enough to be disturbed while I'm busy with the ship's papers without bein' called upon to hear a fool of a mate tryin' to imitate a swan."

"I wasn't trying to imitate no swan."

"Well, maybe it was the sea-serpent you were tryin' to make game of, but don't you go hissin' and spittin' in my presence again."

"I was tellin' you the name of the place in Wales the chap came from. It's took me about ten minutes before I could get it on my tongue, and that's the thanks I get."

"You can tell the name o' the place without all this foolin', don't tell me."

The mate withdrew his head hastily. In strong language he condemned some one collectively, and then consigned his own eyes and other parts of his anatomy to every variety of torment. He sprang on to the rail, and jumped ashore.

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"The skipper won't see you," he said. "Put up your fists."

"What for I put up my fists?" asked the Welshman.

"For callin' me a liar."

"I am a minister, a man of peace, and I do not fight. Besides, I was right when I said the captain was aboard."

"You called me a liar."

"I only meant to say the Captain was on board."

"Well, wot if he is?" inquired the mollified mate.

"He is engaged to marry my sister, and I am here to know whether he intends to carry out the promise, or to repudiate it. In either case I shall know what to do. If he will not, the law shall make him pay."

The mate whistled. He was about to blurt out some comments when a feminine voice intervened.

"WHAT does he say, Hugh Price?"

The mate turned round and raised his cap to a dark girl neatly dressed. She looked calm but determined.

"This is my sister, Miss Gladys Morgan," the brother explained to the mate.

Murray bowed again. As his hands were streaked with tar he put them in his pocket.

She acknowledged his salutation with a jerk.

"What does he say?" she asked again.

"He refuses to see us," said her brother.

"Oh, indeed! Then come with me and we'll see him," was the indignant answer.

Murray caught her by the arm.

"The skipper is just 'avin' a bath," he cried. "You can't go to him now. Wait here, please, and I'll see what can be done."

After some hesitation this was agreed to, and Murray sprang aboard.

"It's come at last. I said it would," he blurted out as he flung open the cabin door and confronted his chief. "Here's a girl wot you promised to marry, brought the parson with her, ring, marriage license, everything arranged. I always said——"

"Hold on! Wot do you mean? Who is it?"

"A Welsh girl, dark, fine eyes, don't remember name—— Yes: Morgan."

"I know a hundred thousand Morgans in Wales. Wot is her Christian name?"

The mate shook his head. "Really, he did mention it when he introduced me. Wot *was* it?"

"Rose? Laura? Mona?"

"I've got it," said the mate triumphantly. "Gladys."

"Gladys," repeated the Captain. "I don't remember no Gladys. 'Ave I ever mentioned a Gladys to you?"

"No," said Murray. "Let me think, though. There was Rosina."

"She was a Shields girl," explained his chief.

"Molly and Polly."

"Molly and Polly are the same one," corrected the skipper.

"There was Rose."

"Rose is short for Rosina, you fool. 'Ave you *no* sense? And none of these is Welsh. There must be some mistake. Tell them to go away. Ask her to call to-morrow."

"We shall be at sea," said the mate.

"I know that, you idiot," was his Captain's comment.

"I said you was havin' a bath and would see them presently."

"You blazing fool!—Stay, you're right; there was a Gladys," he broke off; "a Swansea girl. She was cook to a Welsh M. P., but I only walked out with her twice or so."

"That's quite enough in Wales. Cook to an M. P., too. Nice headings we shall 'ave in the evening paper: 'M. P.'s Cook Jilted. Question Raised in the House of Commons. Cabinet in Tears.' Oh, you've done it this time, I don't think."

Captain Cutting fumbled helplessly with a waistcoat-button.

"Yes, for 'eaven's sake, fasten that up," cried the mate. "Why, it's worse than anything I ever thought."

"It's no use goin' on like this, Murray." The skipper shook his head warningly. "We must do somethink. Why, I've gone ten times as far with girls and no thought o'marriage ever entered their heads or mine."

"Gorleston gals know you; others don't. Wot with your gals and widows and cousins, it's a miracle you 'aven't been nabbed before. I can't think of nothink," said the mate with a gesture of finality.

"You'll 'ave to think o' somethink. You invite them aboard—you——"

"Hold 'ard. Nat Vincent can 'elp us in this. Let's get him into the cabin. He'll receive 'em as Captain Cutting and then he'll explain and they'll see they're on the track of the wrong man. Same name, different chap, mistake easily made."

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The troubled face of the Captain cleared somewhat.

"Don't go undoin' those buttons, now you've got 'em fastened up. You're not goin' to bed. Here, just go into the pantry until we get it over. Trust to me," said Murray.

"Send Vincent aft and I'll tell him what he's got to do," agreed the skipper quickly. "He's our man."

A few seconds later the situation was being explained to Able Seaman Nat Vincent.

"I see," he said decisively. "I'm Captain Cutting; simply ask their business; never seen the girl before. Anything else? No apology, and the mate shows 'em ashore."

"Put on my gold gilt cap—my best one. Get it out of the locker, Mr. Mate," commanded Cutting.

Vincent tried it on and admired himself in the glass.

"I'm ready for them," he said.

"I'll stay here in the pantry," said the skipper.

Vincent nodded assent, and again returned to the looking-glass, smiling grimly at his face reflected in the glory of the Captain's cap.

Murray introduced the visitors.

"The Rev. Mr. Morgan and Miss Morgan," he announced.

"Glad to see you, brother; and you too, sister," Nat said, advancing and shaking hands.

"It was Captain Cutting we wished to see," began the girl. "Has he finished his bath?" She looked puzzled.

"I told him you were just goin' to have a bath, Nat. It's all right, you——"

"Are you aware you are speakin' to your Captain, Mr. Mate? If you forget to say 'sir' again, I'll disrate you. I've told you about it before."

Murray gasped.

"You may leave the cabin, and don't let it occur again, do you 'ear?"

"Yes, *sir*."

"And I say, Murray," as the mate turned to go.

"Yes, *sir*."

"Wash your 'ands before you come into my cabin again. Now wot can I do for you?" he inquired while the mate withdrew. "I'm Captain Cutting."

The three looked at each other. There was a moment's silence.

"Why, there he is," cried the girl as she rushed to the mantelpiece and picked up a photograph of the gay Captain Cutting. "How dare you say you are Captain Cutting?"

FOR the moment Nat was taken aback. There was a groan from the pantry, but the old seaman soon recovered his self-possession.

"That's my son," he lied calmly.

"He promised to marry me," she said.

"Are you Gladys—Gladys Morgan?"

The next moment she was clutched in an affectionate embrace and Vincent, in a warm, fatherly way, was kissing her.

"Why, he often spoke of you," he said, repeating the salutation. "How proud I should 'ave been to 'ave 'ad you as a darter. Just before he died——"

"Is he dead then?" She broke away quickly from his embrace.

"Yes," said the imperturbable Vincent; "quite dead. He died in these arms after expressing his penitence."

"Where is he buried?" asked the suspicious Gladys.

"At sea," said Vincent.

Brother and sister looked at each other inquiringly, as if uncertain as to the next step.

"Which was his cabin?" she inquired.

"This was. I mean, this was his ship and he slept forward with the other A. B.'s. This was his watch," and he picked up the skipper's gold timepiece. "His last words were, 'Give this to Gladys with a kiss from me.'"

There was a loud groan from the pantry, which Vincent smothered in another loud embrace.

"Why didn't you send on the watch to me?" she asked.

"I would 'ave done, but he died tryin' to say the name of the place you lived at. Will you go away, Mr. Mate?" as Murray, attracted by the sound of kissing, again entered the cabin. "Another word from you and I will discharge you.—Poor fellow, he was my son, but he was a terrible blackguard."

Vincent stopped as he heard a noise in the pantry.

"Yes," he repeated loudly, "a terrible blackguard. He was nearly always in jail. He was a lost sheep if ever there was one in this world. Mr. Murray!" he shouted.

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The mate, who was on deck, seated near the open skylight, responded.

"Yes, *sir*."

"Send that stooard out of the pantry and close the door. Tell 'im to go forward at once, immediately."

Sounds indicative of objection on some one's part followed this instruction.

"The stooard refuses to go," reported Murray.

"I'll put him in irons for mutiny. I'll—— Here, Gladys, 'ave this silver inkstand as a keepsake."

The joyous exclamation of the girl and the thanks of the brother fortunately neutralized the plaintive curse from the pantry.

" 'As that stooard gone forward yet, Mr. Mate?"

"No, *sir*."

"This will be useful to you, Mr. Morgan, to write your sermons. My son was an extravagant lad and he bought hisself this gold-mounted fountain pen just for swank, for he could scarcely write with a' ordinary pen and I spent pounds on his education. Mr. Mate, 'as the stooard gone forward?"

"No, *sir*."

"Here is a nice little thing, this gold chain and seals, which my son valued," Vincent calmly went on. "I'm told it is worth a ten-pound note. He wished——"

"The stooard 'as gone forward, sir," bawled Murray.

Vincent nodded and continued.

"He wished me to wear it. But there I am, keeping you, pouring my sorrows into your ears and making the waters o' bitterness overflow. Life is full o' tears, brother, but perhaps it is all for the best. It may be an 'appy escape for you, my dear. In this world everythink happens for the best, as your brother will tell you."

THE Rev. H. Price Morgan cast up his eyes to the deck and seemed rather surprised to see the mate's face glued against the glass. He coughed, lost the thread of his ideas and sighed.

"It's no use staying here," said his sister. "Come on."

"Pity you've 'ad all your trouble for nothink," said Vincent; "but it's a disappointin' world. How fortunate it is your brother is a minister of grace. May I ask what perticular persuasion?"

"Baptist, sir."

"Ah, I am a long way off you. I'm one o' the Lost Tribes. You will remember there was twelve o' them originally, and ten o' them got lost; but I says, *is* they lost?"

"Come on," said the sister, impatiently.

"How can they be lost when Saxon means Isaac's son? Isn't it plain?"

But the visitors were climbing the narrow companionway, and the mate was waiting to show them over the side. From the chink in the galley-door an infuriated skipper was watching their departure and swearing vengeance on Vincent.

A fluttering murmur sounding to the mate like a strain of music escaped the lips of Gladys as he helped her to land. Vincent stood on the poop and kissed his hand. The two men watched the retreating figures, reluctant to lose sight of a shapely maid.

A hard fist planted with some force in the middle of Vincent's back recalled him to his true position in the order of ship-discipline. As the stricken man yelled, the mate sprang up the rigging. It was a broken, disconnected outflow of words which came from Captain Cutting. Vincent picked himself up and faced his assailant.

"Where's my gold watch and chain and seals and fountain pen, you diseased old horror? You scab of the sea! You old web-foot—you—— Wot you mean by givin' my things away?"

"Look at 'im!" shouted the mate from the security of the ratlines. "Where would you have been? Wot would 'ave become of you if Nat and me hadn't faced the moosic for you?"

The Captain sprang into the ratlines and Murray shinned up to the cross-bar.

"They're comin' back!" he shouted. "Morgan and 'is sister!"

Cutting did not wait. He dived into the forecastle. Murray and Vincent seized the opportunity to go ashore until the storm subsided.

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THE MAN WHO COULD NOT DIE

By Arthur D. Howden Smith

CHAPTER I

STOYAN HAS AN "AFFAIR"

HIS name was Stoyan Jakaroff. To you that may not mean anything. But in Bulgaria to be a Jakaroff is to sit close to the Throne—in its very shadow, in fact. His father, the great Stoyan, was one of the most famous of the revolutionary *heiducks* who fought for liberty in the time of the nation's birth. One of his uncles is a Justice of the Supreme Court of the Kingdom. Another has been Minister of War and Adjutant-General to the Czar. A third is a prominent member of the Sobranje and a cabinet minister.

When young Stoyan was baptized, he was held in the arms of a lady of the Court, and the Prince of Bulgaria, Alexander, the hero of Slivnitza, stood godfather to him. There was never a boy born in Bulgaria under more favorable auspices than Stoyan Jakaroff.

And yet from birth he was pursued by an evil genius. Everything that he could want was laid before him, in striking contrast to the lot of most lads in the poor little mountain-land. Every advantage was his. He had foreign tutors, all manner of luxuries, playmates in the Palace.

But he was cursed with a fiendish temper and absolute lack of self-control. Long before he entered the Military Academy he had gotten into trouble with the *gens d'armes*, because he was the son of his father and above the law.

When I first knew him, some years before the latest Balkan War, he was in Sofia on detached duty with the General Staff, one of the gayest of the young bloods who lounge on the verandas of the Military Club in the afternoons and ogle the beauties passing by. Also, he had already established a promising reputation as a rake and debauchee.

I shall never forget the last time we met, there in the Military Club. He was a likely youngster, slim, short, but with a fine head, and a limber, aggressive carriage—a soldier through and through. He was a good man on the drill-ground or at maneuvers, too, if all accounts spoke true.

That afternoon he and his boon companions, some young swaggerers of the Royal Guard, were in glorious spirits, but not one of them could touch Jakaroff in spontaneity of persiflage. They were joking him, I remember, about an affair with an Austrian woman who was then very much talked of in Sofia and who had been introduced to society by the Austrian Legation.

"If you gave a bit more time to cards and less to the lady, you'd be better off, Jakaroff," one of the older officers said, half seriously.

"Tchut," returned Jakaroff. "You can't have luck at the parlor game and charm the Napoleons too."

I REMEMBER this so distinctly, because of the head-lines that flared across the front sheet of every newspaper in the Bulgarian capital the next morning. It is an old story and not a very pleasant one, so there is no use in going into details. The woman had been a paid agent, a spy if you like, of the ubiquitous Austrian secret service, and, as was afterward learned, had been brought to Sofia for the specific purpose of abstracting from young Jakaroff certain military secrets that he was working upon for the General Staff. The young fool fell madly in love with her, but when he suddenly discovered simultaneously that she had been using him as a tool to betray his country's secrets and had been faithless to him into the bargain, he lost his head completely.

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The *gendarmerie* patrol forced their way into the house to find him standing in the doorway of the room, his smoking pistol still in his hand. The woman was dead.

If he had been anybody but a Jakaroff he would have been shot for it, but his uncles exerted their influence with the Government, and the whole affair was hushed up. The woman was not a particularly estimable character anyway, and had no friends to protest. As for Jakaroff, he was smuggled out of the country with a limited supply of money and orders not to show his face again. His name was stricken off the roster of his Regiment, and his story was used as a lesson to all young officers who showed any tendency to succumb to the temptations of the capital.

Stoyan Jakaroff disappeared.

For a time he was heard of in Paris, Brussels and Saint Petersburg. Then word came that he had gone to America. After that there was silence. He never wrote to his family, never sent any messages back to his comrades in the army, some of whom would gladly have helped him had they known how. He might have been dead, and in the course of a couple of years his death was tacitly taken for granted. It was a convenient escape from a nasty situation, a good way to wipe a disagreeable blot off the page, and everybody who was at all concerned with him was very glad to seize upon it as an excuse for forgetting that Stoyan Jakaroff, whose family ranked next to the Throne, was a wanderer, sick, friendless, and poor, among strange people in a strange land.

Some theologians, and a great many persons who are not theologians, hold that those who have sinned experience their hell-fire on earth, and certainly if this was ever true of anybody it was true of Stoyan Jakaroff. All his short life he had been a spoiled pet of fortune. He had never known what it was to want or to face serious trouble. Whenever he had wanted money he had gotten it for the asking.

His companions had been soldiers and people of the Court. He knew nothing about every-day life, especially life outside of the narrow confines of Bulgaria. And his one mad desire, after he had been shipped across the frontier in the dead of night, his uncle the General's bitter words still ringing in his ears, was to forget what had happened, to be able to sleep occasionally without having that woman's last shriek for mercy beating through his brain.

Now, anybody else might have been able to find sensible ways of forgetting, but Stoyan Jakaroff knew but one way—dissipation. Experience had taught him that a whirlwind round of pleasures enabled him to lose all recollection of unpleasantness.

So, driven to desperation by the memories that hounded him and the growing realization of the fact that he had ruined his life, he reeled across Europe, throwing money right and left, drunk with shame and misery, until he fetched up at last in Hamburg with the bare price of a steerage ticket for New York in his pocket. He was sick, already, the result of physical and nervous exhaustion, combined with exposure. The fact that he got through Ellis Island only proves the weak points of our vaunted immigration service.

The man, then twenty-five, was a mere wreck, a shadow. His face was pallid, sunken and hollow, with touches of carmine under the high cheek-bones. His eyes flared unnaturally, and his thick black hair straggled down across his forehead, always dank with unhealthy sweat. Every now and then a short, guttural cough racked his gaunt body.

He made his way to a Bulgarian hotel in down-town Manhattan, where he gave an assumed name, posing as an immigrant from a little-known district of Macedonia, and set out to look for work. What could he do, this man who had been bred in a little, old-fashioned Balkan Court, with the sword his only tool? He worked by turns as stevedore, furnace-man, janitor of a tenement house, teamster, handy man to a florist. All of his employers discharged him because at intervals he was unable to keep from drinking.

HE WENT down the social scale very rapidly. It takes a shorter time than some sheltered persons think. Once a man's self-respect is gone, it is not hard to rob him of well-nigh every instinct of self-control. Moral degeneration is uncannily abrupt—and in Jakaroff's case it was assisted by the disease which was undermining his physique.

Five years after he had left Sofia the process of transformation was nearly complete. There was very little left of the care-free, jaunty young officer who had

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been one of the smartest dandies on the veranda of the Military Club. A demoralized, wolfish look had settled on his face; his eyes had become shifty and cunning.

Then one day, when he shuffled into Vasil Pop Stephanoff's restaurant for his midday lunch—that was chiefly cognac—he found the other patrons in an uproar. Men stood on chairs and waved newspapers wildly in the air. Others laughed and tried to pull them down. Half a dozen debates were in full progress.

On the center table, an old Rumelian who had fought in the right wing at Slivnitza was drawing an elaborate plan of the battle with bread-crums. Even the scarred soul of Jakaroff warmed to a sense of national pride. It was evident that something had happened. Tchut! he asked himself, was it possible that war with Turkey was coming—that war for which the Bulgars had been grooming and training themselves for upward of thirty years?

He slouched into a chair opposite the veteran of Slivnitza.

"Well, well, bi-Peter, what's it all about?" he mumbled, as he waved to the only waiter of the establishment in sign that he was ready for his cognac.

"What!" exclaimed the old man. "Have you not heard?"

"How should I hear?" replied Jakaroff, dully.

"How, indeed!" sneered a man down the table. "The cognac gives you no time for newspapers, does it, Grueneff?"

Grueneff was the alias Jakaroff now called himself by. Some spark of the man that he had been flared into being under his sunken breast at this insult, and he snapped back:

"Have a care, you! I am not consorting with your kind."

"Leave Grueneff alone," advised several others. "He never does any harm, and a man has a right to die the way he wants to."

Jakaroff overheard them. He laughed sardonically.

"Die? I die? You fools, I can not die. Don't you suppose I would if I could? But I can not. I should have died long ago, if it had been possible. But come, bi-Peter, you have not told me what it's all about."

"War!" shrilled the old man, excitedly. "War! The Czar is to declare war, and with him the Kings of Greece, Servia and Montenegro. It is to be the last crusade, to drive the Turks back to Asia. There will be big battles, bigger even than Slivnitza. Already Vasil Pop has received a telegram that the reservists are to go home. I am no longer a reservist and I have taken out my citizen's papers, but I go to-morrow. See you, I would not miss this for anything."

Jakaroff listened to him in silence. He drained the cognac the waiter brought him.

"So?" he answered. "It is war, eh? Well, that is good. We have been preparing for it long enough."

"It is a dangerous business," said the man who had sneered at him before. "There are a great many more Turks than Bulgarians, Servians, Greeks and Montenegrins put together. We should be mad to try it."

"Are you a Bulgar?" asked Jakaroff, quietly.

"What is that to you?" blustered the man. "Yes, I am a Bulgar, as good a one as you, and more sober."

"Where do you come from?" pressed Jakaroff, strangling a cough with another glass of cognac.

"From Monastir," answered the man, somewhat uneasily.

"Ah," said Jakaroff, as quietly as before. "That explains it. Your mother was a Greek. Well, brothers, a man whose mother was a Greek could not be expected to have much faith in the Bulgars. But you may believe me when I say that this will be a war worth seeing. I know."

The wild glare that usually lit his eyes only when he was very drunk gripped the attention of the men about him.

"You speak as if you know, Grueneff," said the veteran of Slivnitza.

"I do know," Jakaroff reaffirmed. "I helped to draw the plans for this war, bi-Peter. But that was five years ago."

There was a stir about the table.

"But—but then you must be an officer, Grueneff," suggested one man.

"I was," returned the exile, dully.

The glare had left his eyes. He played idly with some bread-crums that had been part of the battle plan of Slivnitza.

"Grueneff?" repeated the veteran. "I know many of our officers' names, but I do not know that."

"Did you ever hear the name Jakaroff?" asked the dull-eyed man opposite him.

"Jakaroff? But certainly. There is General Ivan Jakaroff, and his brother, the

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Judge, and his other brother, the Vice-President of the Sobranje. And then there was the great Stoyan—we all know who he was. But he is dead now."

"And I am the little Stoyan," snarled Jakaroff, out of the side of his mouth. "Did you never hear of the little Stoyan Jakaroff?"

There was a silence in the room.

"Well, the little Stoyan Jakaroff is going back to his country—back to the country he was banished from."

Jakaroff got unsteadily to his feet. "I helped plan this war, and I—I—I'm going to help fight it. 'Specially as I can't die. The Devil wouldn't let me, brothers. I'd like to, but I can't. No use; I've tried."

He rose and lurched up-stairs to the corner where Vasil Pop allowed him to sleep, rather than see a fellow-countryman in the gutter.

CHAPTER II

STOYAN GETS A CHANCE

ACCORDING to European standards, the Bulgarian army is very youthful. But even before the Balkan War it had established a standard of *esprit de corps* that you will not find surpassed anywhere. The honor of a regiment was the honor of the least recruit in the ranks.

And strange to say, this honor was not pinned to any one of the fetiches usually employed to rivet men's allegiance. It was not embodied in the Czar, nor in the colors, nor in some vague tradition of the past. It was joined direct to the land, the land in defense of which, for the aggrandizement of which, every man was glad to die. A Bulgar's first thought in battle was that he must fight "for the honor of the land."

No matter how far away from home a man might travel, if the "call to the colors" was issued he promptly directed his steps toward the mobilization depot of his regiment. For a Bulgar to neglect to do so would be for him automatically to expatriate himself.

Therefore when the word went forth that the Czar of little Bulgaria, with his allies of Servia, Greece and Montenegro, was mobilizing his forces against the Moslem, Bulgars all over the world started home as fast as they could travel. Thousands sailed from America. They filled the steerage quarters of the east-bound steamers.

And one of the first to sail was Stoyan Jakaroff. Nobody knew where he got the money. His companions regarded him curiously, but it is a Bulgar characteristic never to interfere in another person's business. Since the outburst in Vasil Pop's, Jakaroff had kept silent, and although his story had become common property among his countrymen, none of them ever alluded to it.

In company with several hundred others he disembarked at Hamburg and commenced the dreary ride across Europe in third-class coaches. At Belgrade there was a long delay, for the line from the Servian capital to the Bulgarian frontier was blocked with trains of munitions of war, but finally a train was made up for the returning reservists, and they crawled slowly toward the homeland, careless for the most part whether they made two miles or five miles an hour, so long as they knew that they were gradually approaching the scene of the conflict where should be decided their nation's destiny.

At the frontier the guards hustled them forward.

"You are late, brothers," exclaimed the platform sentries, lean, long-headed westerners, closely akin to the Servian borderers they despised. "This is no time for dallying."

"We come from America," said the old veteran of Slivnitza, from his perch in a box-car beside Jakaroff. "Do you think we could fly here? Son of a pig, you have never been farther than Nisch! And I was a soldier before you were suckled."

There was a general laugh, in which all except Jakaroff joined. He leaned over the side of the car, deadly earnest, his white face and staring eyes uncanny in their intentness.

"Has there been fighting yet?" he asked.

"Nothing much," returned a sentry. "Cavalry work mostly. They say we attack at the end of the week."

A GENERAL babble of conversation broke out as the box-cars commenced to discuss this information, but Jakaroff sank down on the hard wooden floor, content, for all the jagged cough that shook him at irregular intervals. He would be in time for the big battles that were bound to come.

He could almost put his finger on the

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map and point out the scene of each, as he thought of them. But there was no use being impatient. Evidently, Fate had ordained that he should return to Bulgaria. Therefore it would be well to leave matters in the hands of Fate.

Throughout the remainder of the tedious journey he paid no attention to the scenes around him. He crouched in the bottom of the box-car brooding over the future, weaving strange, fantastic dreams, colored with the weird light of a diseased brain, for the first time in five years forgetting the past in contemplation of what was to come.

At certain villages they passed long ranks of cheering men waiting their turns to embark for the front. Elsewhere women and children were packed deep on the platforms, waving a greeting to the home-coming reservists, or ready with loaves of bread and baskets of grapes for their refreshment. But Jakaroff knew nothing of these demonstrations.

He did not fully come to himself until he stood in the middle of the barrack-square at Orsova, facing Captain Demetrius Zontcheff, officer in charge of the formation of the reserve companies of the Orsova Regiment, the 45th of the Line, who had often confronted Jakaroff across the mess-table in the old days. At first, Zontcheff barely glanced at the frail figure that stood before him in the full glare of the October sun, shabby and unkempt. Then he noticed the hectic flush on the man's cheeks and looked closer.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, sharply. "We don't want invalids to fight the Turks. Have the surgeons examined you?"

"No, sir," answered Jakaroff, in the flat, lifeless voice that had become one of the characteristics imparted by years of moral disintegration and hardship in a foreign land.

"Well, get off to him. Stay, though. There's no use, and he's busy. What's your company? I'll see about your discharge, myself."

"But I do not wish to be discharged," protested Jakaroff, whiningly. "I have come all the way from America, Captain, and I can fight. Indeed I can. You will see that I can. I do not look strong, but I can fight. And I am better than many."

"Umph," said Zontcheff, doubtfully. "But what's your company?"

"I have no company," said Jakaroff. "I was last on detached duty."

"Detached duty? Where, man?"

"With the General Staff."

Involuntarily, and almost without his own knowledge, Jakaroff's voice had begun to take to itself some of the crisp snappiness of tone that distinguished the man he talked with.

"Name?" questioned Zontcheff, notebook in hand and pencil poised. A long line of reserves were waiting to be examined and assigned to their companies, and he wanted to get rid of this peculiar fellow.

"Jakaroff, Stoyan."

The hand that held the pencil shook perceptibly and was lowered.

"St. George! You don't mean that?" exclaimed Zontcheff, peering closer. "Are you—is—you are not Stoyan Jakaroff, who—who was——"

"I am Stoyan Jakaroff," reaffirmed the slovenly figure tonelessly. "It is true that I was put out of the Regiment and that I am not fit to fight in it. But many will die, and it is fit that all who know of military affairs should offer themselves. So I have come.

"I can not die, but I can take the place of some man who might die. Give me another chance, Captain. This is a time when any man who asks it should have a chance to offer himself for the homeland."

As he concluded, the toneless quality left his voice again, and for a moment his eyes glowed feverishly. Zontcheff found himself carried away, despite his efforts to the contrary, and without thinking he dropped back to the old confidential tone of intimate and brother officer.

"Curse it, Jakaroff, don't I know all that you say is true?" he protested. "I'll do anything I can for you, but you're not fit for a campaign. Why, man, you're spitting blood!"

"If you can't send me, I will have to try another depot," said Jakaroff, dully. "I thought the old Regiment——I wanted this chance."

He turned away listlessly.

"Hold on," called Zontcheff. "I didn't mean to turn you off. Wait a minute. Here, take this note over to the Doctor. He'll look after you until we can arrange matters."

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THE rotten hulk of the man who had once been the pride of the Orsova Regiment thanked him without any animation and slouched off across the parade-ground toward the yellow-painted hospital buildings, already beginning to fill up with wounded cavalrymen from the Thracian frontier.

"To think that that is Stoyan Jakaroff!" exclaimed Zontcheff, as he returned to the task of sorting out reservists. "And I used to wonder if sometimes we didn't make the story too strong for the cadets!"

That night he held council with the Barrack-Surgeon.

"Did you——" Zontcheff nodded toward the little room just off the Surgeon's office where Jakaroff had been put to bed by a nurse.

"Yes," answered the Doctor, who had been with the Regiment longer than either of them. "He told me. I should never have recognized him otherwise. What are you going to do about it?"

"What can I do?"

"He seems to be a dying man," continued the Surgeon, thoughtfully. "But it's hard to say just what that means. Some of these fellows hang on with half a lung longer than an able-bodied man can resist pneumonia. And whether you let him go or not, he'll get there somehow. Mania."

Zontcheff touched his forehead, interrogatively.

"I shouldn't wonder," admitted the Doctor. "He seems to have used himself terribly. All gone to pieces. The most magnificent wreck of a human machine I ever saw. He's too far gone to be fixed up, though a feature of his mania seems to be a belief that he can not die. Shall you communicate with his uncles?"

"Why?" returned Zontcheff. "They have more on their shoulders now than ordinary men can stand. It will do no good to tell them Stoyan is here. But curse it, Doctor, do you know I like the way he has come back? He has a right to die like a soldier, if he wants to, and I'd like to help him to it."

"He'd never last a week in the ranks, carrying a Mannlicher, as he is now," warned the Doctor.

"I suppose not. Tell you what, though; you've got a party of your corps going to the front soon, haven't you? Well, why couldn't we send poor old Stoyan along with them? It would give him a chance to get near the firing-line, and perhaps he could get knocked over cleanly like a soldier, after all."

"The man can't stand any real work," said the Surgeon, thoughtfully, "but perhaps that would be better than anything else."

So two days later, after a rest and the most nourishing diet that the primitive facilities of a Bulgarian hospital could supply, Stoyan Jakaroff found himself boarding a train for the front with the reserve companies of his old Regiment. But to his great chagrin he was ordered to report for duty with the hospital detachment.

CHAPTER III

STOYAN BECOMES INVENTIVE

NOW, the Orsova Regiment was attached to the Third Army, commanded by General Ratko Dimitrieff. All of the reservists knew this, but none of them knew where the Third Army lay, except that it was somewhere in the locality vaguely termed "the area of mobilization," an area shut off from the rest of Bulgaria as if by a stone wall that reached in a long, irregular line along the Macedonian and Thracian frontier, from Servia to the Black Sea. Consequently, to the reservists, with the sole exception of Jakaroff, their destination was a matter of surpassing interest.

Hour after hour they argued the plan of campaign, each man fixing upon what was to him the ideal place from which to launch the Regiment across the Turkish frontier. For two days they traveled steadily at a pace that seldom bettered two miles an hour. During this time they fought and terminated the campaign successfully in a score of different ways, employing every trick of strategy that had been devised since the days of the great Alexander, who ruled this land they were about to invade.

But Jakaroff took no part in their discussions. Crouched in his own corner of the box-car, eating the rations served out to him, lining up for inspection at the car-side in the morning, oblivious of the country they traversed and of the company about him, he contrived to invest himself with an air of aloofness that was all the more forceful because it was wholly lacking in vanity.

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It did not matter to him what the name was of the town they were bound for. The fact that they were headed for the frontier was sufficient.

Sometimes his cough racked his frail body so that it shook from side to side, and the other men looked at him with curious eyes, nudging each other and muttering, "He'll never last, eh?" But he gave no sign that he heard them or felt his pain.

His eyes stared always in front of him, and when his lips formed themselves into words, they were silent. He might have been living in a world thousands of miles from that inhabited by the men about him, and in all truth he seemed to be a totally different being.

On the third day there was excitement in the air. The trains, loaded with provisions, ammunition and transport-material that had been given right of way over them, were now side-tracked and the troop-trains had a clear road. During the first two days they had totaled barely one hundred miles. Now they were running quite rapidly.

The whisper ran through the box-cars, "Stara Zagora!"

To be sure, men told each other, and why not? Stara Zagora was just across the frontier from Mustapha Pasha, and Mustapha Pasha was the gateway of Adrianople. How simple it was, they decided.

Adrianople was the first nut to crack. They had been taught that in school. The army that would invade Turkey must first reckon with Adrianople.

Yes, it was very simple. They were pointed toward Stara Zagora. *Ergo*, they were destined for Adrianople. Presently men leaned from the car-doors, cupping hands to ears, jealous of detecting the first thunder of the besieging cannon.

But disappointment was in store for them. At a way-station some ten miles outside of Stara Zagora, an officer strode quickly along the line of the cars, note-book in hand.

"Detrain all reserve companies of the 45th," he ordered before each car. "Only the hospital detachment will continue to Stara Zagora."

WHEN the train rumbled on ten minutes later, Jakaroff was almost alone in his car. But he took no part in the grumbling of his comrades, much mystified by this unexpected occurrence and prone to suspect that they were being cheated out of the best chances in the campaign.

He sat as emotionless as a dead man until the engine pulled the nearly empty train into the bustling switch-yard at Stara Zagora. Then as the train came to a stop beside a platform, and the racket of wheels and straining trucks died down with a last hiss of steam, a faint, far-off rumble like the clacking of monster bowling-pins miles away sounded clear above all other noises.

And in the instant Jakaroff was electrified to life.

He leaped to the platform before any of his comrades, and stood there listening to the clamor of the cannonade, a look of rapt expectancy on his face. Presently he touched a sergeant of the station-guard on the shoulder.

"Where is it, brother?" he asked, in an awed whisper.

"Mustapha Pasha," said the man, shortly. "Kutincheff is pounding his way through."

Jakaroff turned to his mates of the hospital detachment.

"Come," he urged, feverishly. "We must get forward. There is work to be done over there."

But a surgeon on the platform intervened.

"Not so fast, man," he ordered. "Wait for your orders. There is work enough for you to do here. Fall in. March."

And he led the new detachment some distance up the railroad-yards to a car loaded with medical supplies, which were to be broken out and removed to the headquarters hospital on a hill above the town. Jakaroff worked sullenly with the rest, because the habit of military obedience was too deeply ingrained in him to resist. But when darkness came and the squad were dismissed, he took the first opportunity to slip off to the railroad line.

An engine and several coaches stood by the station, evidently awaiting the arrival of some high officer before starting for the front. The sight of them gave Jakaroff his plan. He walked briskly down the platform, and accosted the sentry on the steps of the last coach.

"Has the General gone aboard yet?" he demanded.

"No."

"I am a messenger from the Surgeon-General to the Chief Medical Officer at the front."

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Without another word, he pushed his way on to the steps and entered the coach. The sentry, carried away by his self-assurance, made no attempt to stop him. He found a seat inside and made himself comfortable in an obscure compartment.

Fifteen minutes passed. Then a party of officers climbed aboard, glanced in at him, huddled in a corner, and passed down the aisle of the car. The engine whistled; there was a jangling of couplings; and the train pulled out. Jakaroff went to sleep, lulled by the rocking motion of the cars and the soft cushions he lay upon—the softest he had known in some days.

He woke up with a heavy hand on his shoulder and a gruff voice in his ear.

"Well, well," the voice was saying. "Who are you, private? What do you do here?"

Jakaroff trembled under the heavy grip, but his voice was steady as he answered:

"A messenger to the Chief Medical Officer at the front, sir."

"Aye?" said the gruff voice. "Well then, look alive, man. We have reached the railhead. Tumble out and find yourself a horse, if you are going on with us."

Jakaroff followed him out of the coach, and in the dim light of lanterns hung about a little station made out a cluster of horses and a troop of cavalrymen of the Guard, eagles' feathers two feet high projecting from their natty busbies. A horse was given to him readily enough when he identified himself, and then he found himself riding through the darkness at the heels of a group of officers followed by the cavalry detachment.

Before long they came to a massive stone bridge, lighted by oil lanterns strung at intervals upon poles. Part of the coping on one side had been knocked off. Jakaroff heard a trooper behind him laugh as a comrade made a gibe about "bungling Turk work." Troops and artillery were crossing the bridge in a dense column, but the staff officer regulating the passage held them up to give the little squad of officers and their escort a chance to get over.

On the other side lay a small village, through the streets of which they rode slowly, challenged at almost every other step by shadowy sentries. And in the end they rode out into an open square, full of horses and lounging troopers. In front of an inn they halted, and the officers dismounted.

JAKAROFF, deeming himself well rid of them, was about to turn his horse and betake himself in search of information of advantage, when the gruff-voiced officer who had aroused him chanced to spy him again.

"Ho, there, hospital orderly!" he hailed. "Not so fast. You don't need that horse."

"No, sir," stammered Jakaroff.

"Well, get off," said the officer, rather contemptuously. "Horses are for fighting-men."

"St. Demetrius!" boomed a new voice. "Is that one of my fellows you have there?"

"Yes, Doctor," answered the gruff-voiced one. "He has a message for you—or says he has."

Jakaroff tumbled hastily off his horse, but before he could lose himself in the shadows a big man pushed himself through the crowd of men and horses, and raising a lantern he held in one hand, flashed it upon the wastrel's face.

"What's your message?" he asked, briefly.

"I was sent up to make myself useful to the Chief Medical Officer at the front, sir," answered Jakaroff as smoothly as he could.

"Umph, is that so? Well, I'm the Chief Medical Officer."

The lantern was flashed closer.

"St. Demetrius! Why didn't they send me a real man? You're a candidate for hospital yourself, my friend."

"I'm stronger than I look, sir," replied Jakaroff, faintly.

"You'll need to be," the man with the booming voice reassured him grimly. "The men under me are doing five men's work apiece."

"Why, were the losses heavy, Doctor?" asked the gruff-voiced man.

"Not so heavy for our men, but the enemy were badly cut up, and of course, they left all their wounded for us to look after. No General Staff seems to think it worth while to reckon on adequately looking after the men who have been hit. St. Demetrius! They send me a handful of incompetents, and expect me to look after the *débris* of a modern battlefield. Here, you fellow with phthisis, come with me."

Jakaroff cringed to the voice of his latest master, and followed him dumbly—because he must, not because he wished to—down a side street and into a church that was filled knee-deep with straw and lined with men

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in bloody bandages, some of whom tossed and muttered and shrieked and groaned and some of whom lay very still, with only the faint dew of agony marking their brows. An involuntary shudder as he crossed the threshold was marked by the Surgeon, who fixed him with a keen glance.

"Afraid?"

"I can not die," answered Jakaroff, dully.

"No? Well, tear up this cloth into bandages, and be alive about it, too. There are strong men bleeding to death for these rolls."

Jakaroff obeyed him, resolving in his heart, however, that he would find some means to escape this unpleasant servitude before many hours were passed. Through some strange quirk of his abnormal brain, he was able to think more quickly and with more precision, now that he was close to danger and face to face with the exigency of the moment.

CHAPTER IV

"GUSPODINE" GETS A MOUNT

TWICE the next day Jakaroff made futile efforts to reach the advancing battle-line that had swept over Mustapha Pasha in an eddy of slaughter and was now dashing itself upon the outworks of Adrianople, that mighty fortress of mystery brooding over the highroad to Constantinople. The deadened clamor of the cannonade, echoing across miles of forest-covered hills, exerted hypnotic influence upon him. It was as if the specter of War, grim and loud-mouthed, beckoned him on, as drink beckons the drunkard. But before many hours had passed another strange influence began to battle for possession of him.

He was homesick for his Regiment, that Regiment which had disgraced him and cast him out, yet for which he had traversed five thousand miles of sea and land that he might take his place in its ranks again. Truly, it is a remarkable thing, this passion of attachment which a regiment excites in the breasts of the least worthy of its members.

At first, Jakaroff had thought nothing of it that the hospital detachment had been separated from the reserve companies of the 45th. Lured on by the far-off muttering of the cannon, he had gloated over his good luck in being brought closer to the battle-line, while the men of the reserve companies were swinging off miles to the eastward, apparently far from the theater of war.

But presently, when it became apparent to him that an impassable barrier had been erected to keep back such as him from the dim region beyond the southern hills, where men fought and strove, he began to wish himself back with his comrades of the reserve companies, tramping over the frontier roads to join Dimitrieff's Third Army. He began to hunger for a sight of the Regimental colors, as a child longs for a sight of the mother he is separated from.

Any soldier feels this way, but in Jakaroff's case the feeling was intensified by some subconscious craving which he did not analyze or seek to understand. He knew only that he wanted to be with his Regiment. He wanted to be with the Regiment so badly that his eyes watered and his lips slavered with self-pity that he should be unable to attain his desire.

That evening he was sent to headquarters with a message to the Chief Commissary Officer. The sentry at the door showed him into the waiting-room, empty save for an officer's cloak and saber draped over a chair, and then left to deliver the message. Jakaroff was tired; attending to men who have been torn and smashed by modern shrapnel and machine gun-fire is a tedious job. But the soldier's training that was innate in his character kept him on the alert, as he crouched on a rude stool. From a room next door came the click of telegraph instruments and occasionally the sharp jangle of a telephone. Then a man's heavy stride cut through the chatter of the busy keys, and there was a scraping of feet as the operators evidently stood to attention.

"What do you hear?" asked the voice of the gruff officer whom Jakaroff had seen on the train.

"Sir," came the voice of an operator, "General Dimitrieff has just telegraphed that the Third Army is in motion to-night, marching in four columns, by Odzakoi and Petra, Erikler and Kovkas-Asklica, Derekoi-Demirdza and Malco Tirnovo. All four columns are following the general line of the Tundja valley, and General Dimitrieff expects to strike the outposts of Kirk-Kilisseh about afternoon of the 24th."

"Good!" exclaimed the gruff voice.

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JAKAROFF leaped to his feet in a single cat-like bound. In an instant his dulled brain began to work with a quick, precise action that it had known of old. Kirk-Kilisseh! Of course! He was a fool not to have thought of it before. Memories of conferences in the private lecture-room of the General Staff crowded back upon him.

If Adrianople was the key to the road to Constantinople, then the entrenched camp of Kirk-Kilisseh was the key to Adrianople. Lying some miles to theeast of the fortress and held in force by three army corps, it constituted a persistent menace to the flank and rear of any army that sought to envelop the Turkish stronghold. Strategy required its capture as a preliminary to any move upon Thrace and the Turkish capital. Here would be the first real battle of the war. The whole plan of campaign revealed itself to Jakaroff in that one lightning-flash reaction of his brain. This persistent hammering on the outworks of Adrianople was but a feint to distract the Turks' attention, to lead them to think that the Bulgarians were going to do exactly what the German strategists had told their Moslem pupils that they should do—bleed themselves to death on the *enceinte* of forts and armored redoubts, which had been erected for that very purpose—while, in the meantime, Dimitrieff led one hundred thousand men in a vast turning movement through the forests of the Tundja valley, to burst unexpectedly upon Kirk-Kilisseh and crumple up the flank of the Turkish barrier across the Constantinople road.

All of this Jakaroff had perceived in less time than it takes to tell it, and before his mind had completely mastered the problem, he was creeping stealthily toward the entrance-door, a plan of action completely matured. A single glance told him that the kindly sentry who had gone in search of the Chief Commissary Officer had not yet returned to his post. The entrance-hall was deserted.

Jakaroff snatched the cloak and saber from the chair upon which they lay, buckled on the one and draped himself in the other, at the same time pulling his cap down low over his eyes, and sauntered leisurely out of the door. He was once more the officer, clothed outwardly in the habiliments of rank, walking with an easy swagger instead of a shuffle.

An orderly held several horses to the right of the door, and Jakaroff snapped his fingers to attract the man's attention. The fellow looked up, saluted and backed up one of the animals, a superb bay.

"I can't loose these others, *guspodine*," he apologized. "The General's is restless."

As he spoke, one of the two other horses he held kicked up its heels, squealed and tried to bite the ear of its mate. Jakaroff profited by the confusion to climb into his saddle.

"Very good, orderly," he answered. "The General will understand why I do not wait."

He drove his heels into the animal's flank and clattered off over the cobblestones of the village street, at the first crossing swinging to the left and so into the open country to the southeast of the advancing Bulgarian army.

His best plan, he reasoned, was to strike eastward along the Turkish side of the frontier, risking encountering marauding parties of bashi-bazouks or Ponaks, and aiming to pick up the right flank of Dimitrieff's army at some point near Jedzali. The exact distance he did not know, but he thought it would take two or three days, depending upon the détours he would have to make. As for protection, he was weaponless, save for the saber he had stolen with the cloak, and he relied upon his wits and his destiny, this wreck of a man.

He encountered no opposition in leaving Mustapha Pasha. The patrols he passed saluted a rider they took to be an aide-de-camp, and within an hour he was in open country, a no-man's land of the frontier, shaping his path by the stars in the sky and the sixth-sense of direction that is acquired in maneuver training.

CHAPTER V

STOYAN REJOINS HIS REGIMENT

NO ONE but a man in Jakaroff's mental condition could have accomplished that journey, through a desolate tract of country between hostile armies, over a tangled network of roads watched by partizans of either side—*chetas* of Macedonian Bulgars, operating loosely in conjunction with the Bulgarian forces; detachments of Turkish irregulars and Moslem tribesmen; and bands of wild Tziganes, who fight for

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no man's hand but their own. That first night he rode until the last star flickered out. Then, in the darkness that comes just before dawn, he led his horse aside from the forest-track and lay down to sleep, with the bridle through his arm.

Shortly after sunrise he was on the trail again. More than once he was obliged to make détours to avoid parties of men, and each time he was taken far out of his way, so that by twilight he had not progressed many miles toward his destination. And by that time he was faint for food, famishing. Luckily, he chanced upon a wood-cutter's hut, and browbeat the old Pomak who occupied it out of a bowl of goat's milk and some brown bread. But in return for this, the Pomak set an itinerant band of gypsies on the trail of the strange horseman, and Jakaroff had to flee all night long, doubling, twisting and turning with tireless vigilance to throw his pursuers off the track. As a result, he found that he had been edged many miles southward from the frontier-line, over toward the range of hills and villages stretching between Adrianople and Kirk-Kilisseh, which constituted the backbone of the Turkish position.

So he pressed on for two days more, and by evening of the second day he had reached a point just west of the village of Jedzali on the heights above it. This was well outside the Turkish lines and on the route along which the Bulgarian columns must march in their onslaught upon Kirk-Kilisseh.

Jakaroff felt that he had earned a rest. With the bridle of his horse over his arm, he lay down on the grass in a little clearing and slept soundly. It wanted several hours of midnight when he was wakened by a confused din that seemed to come from all sides. He crept to the edge of the wood and peered down at the Tundja valley below him, white in the moonlight.

As far as he could see, it swarmed with troops, fez-topped troops in long, sloppy formation such as the Turkish soldier loves, interspersed with batteries of artillery. Some mounted men were riding along the side of the hill a short distance below his aerie, and they came to a halt within earshot of him, watching the procession file by in the moonlight.

Jakaroff clutched the nostrils of his own horse and leaned as far forward as he dared to catch whatever might be said. Like all officers who serve on the Bulgarian General Staff, he had a fluent command of Turkish idiom. He had little difficulty in making out that these troops belonged to the Sixteenth Corps, commanded by Torgut Pasha, and were part of a force flung forward by the Turks to reconnoiter the Bulgarian position with a view to feeling out the possibility of an advance.

Jakaroff waited to hear no more. Stealthily, and with all due caution, he led his horse out of the opposite side of the wood, and struck the branch road that leads from Jedzali to Tartarlar. Then he drove his mount to a gallop, and so he rode, hour after hour, until just before the dawn, when the whistle of a bullet and a hoarse hail in Bulgarian told him that he had reached the outposts of Dimitrieff's army.

"Who are you?" demanded the officer of the patrol, as his men dragged Jakaroff from his horse.

A spasm of coughing racked the spare frame of the messenger, but he managed to stand erect to answer:

"Jakaroff—of the 45th—special messenger."

"The deuce you are! Why, the 45th are brigaded with us."

The officer looked at him suspiciously. Indeed, to begin with, he was of two minds whether to shoot him offhand or send him back to the rear under guard. Jakaroff did not attempt to argue with him, but merely stood and answered such questions as he chose. Of whence he came and how, he refused to give account.

"Very well, *guspodine*," said the lieutenant, sarcastically. "We will send you to your Colonel and let you talk to him."

AN HOUR later Jakaroff was led into the principal room of the headman's house at Tartarlar, where Colonel Radkin of the 45th Orsova Regiment had established headquarters. Colonel Radkin had been in command of the 45th ever since the General Staff had ordered a regiment to be created for the Orsova District. He was the type of regimental commander you read about, but seldom meet—an oldish man, with iron-gray hair, turning silver on the temples, gray mustache and imperial, jauntily twisted, slim of build, with broad shoulders and narrow, sloping hips. An old man, with the figure and eyes of a boy.

"Well?" he demanded.

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It was beyond human ability for him to recognize in the dingy, disease-smitten man before him the one-time pride of the Regiment, its representative on the General Staff.

And at that interrogation, snapped out with the bruskness of a military command, some spark of the man he had been flashed into life in Jakaroff's tortured soul. He straightened to attention, saluted and answered crisply:

"Jakaroff. I report for duty, sir, with information of the enemy's plans."

Colonel Radkin had heard from Zontcheff the story of the scene on the barrack-parade at Orsova, but he was none the less astounded at this apparition brought in from his front.

"What have you to report, sir?" he asked, finally. "How came you where you were?"

Briefly, in the set military phrases prescribed for such a report, Jakaroff detailed how he had left Mustapha Pasha, ridden across country, and finally observed the march of the Turkish Sixteenth Corps toward this very spot. When he had finished, Colonel Radkin looked at him seriously.

"That was a frightful risk to take, Jakaroff," he said. "The chances were one hundred to one against you, you are not a well man, and so far as I can see, you have placed yourself in the light of a deserter twice over."

Jakaroff looked up at him with a pained expression.

"A deserter, sir? I? No, sir. I had to rejoin my Regiment."

"But the danger, man," insisted the Colonel.

A vacant look settled upon Jakaroff's face, blotting out the intellectual interest it had shown while he was narrating his report.

"I—I can not die," he answered, slowly, speaking in set rigid terms like a child repeating a lesson. "I can not—die."

Outside the doorway of the head-man's house, the single street of the village was crammed with brown infantry, swinging along to the rousing tune of a marching song. But suddenly from the south came the insistent tearing rattle of rifle-fire. Instantly the singing died. There was still the "slip-slip-slip" of thousands of boots in the muddy road, but each man's voice was stilled, the better to hear the promise of battle in the distance.

"Come with me," ordered Colonel Radkin.

Five minutes later, the Brigadier had been notified, the Division-Commander had been told the story over the field-telegraph wire, already strung by the Signal-Corps, and the commander of the Division artillery was taking his batteries to the front at a gallop.

"If what this man says turns out to be true," commented the Brigadier, after Jakaroff's story had been repeated to him, "then the enemy are playing directly into our hands. Let us once get them outside their fortifications, and we shall crumple them up so fast that they won't have time to rally when they get back to their works."

When Colonel Radkin started to ride after his Regiment, he found Jakaroff still at his elbow.

"Oh, that's so," he exclaimed as good-humoredly as a busy man could. "We have to find a place for you. Here, I'll give you a note to the hospital-chief."

"But I should like a horse, sir," protested Jakaroff, mildly.

"A horse?"

"Yes, sir. I had a horse when I was captured. I wish to go with you."

"Man, you can't stand any more. Stay here and rest. There will be more fighting before the war is over."

"I am stronger than I look," returned Jakaroff, petulantly—he had been obliged to say this so many times. "I can not die. Besides, I know the ground out there."

Radkin surveyed him speculatively. Yes, there could be no doubt of this last fact. And Jakaroff had always been one of the smartest young topographical officers in the Regiment.

"Very well," said the Colonel, shortly, and he dismounted an orderly to provide a horse for his new aide.

CHAPTER VI

THROUGH TO BUJUKDERE

THE artillery of the Division were already in place and firing furiously in the direction of the Turkish positions above Jedzali. The Bulgarian infantry, pushing forward in long thin lines over the rolling hills, were backing up the gunners with a steady fire of musketry. As the morning dragged by, the Turks were forced back, slowly at first, then faster and faster.

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Jakaroff, riding beside his Colonel, was in the seventh heaven of bliss. He never heeded the curious glances cast at him or the murmurs of pity behind his back. Indeed, if he had known that any man pitied him, he would probably have laughed in his face—laughed for the first time in years. He was happy, now, happy as he had not been, since——But he had drawn a curtain athwart the past. He thought of it no more.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the Turks were shelled out of Jedzali, and with this success the Bulgarian infantry got completely out of hand, as was their wont in the moment of onset. Over against the 45th was the village of Geckenli, held in force by the Second Constantinople Division of the Sixteenth Corps, with two batteries.

In the stampede of the Bulgarian advance, distinctions of rank and individuality had been cast aside. Masses of men—officers, non-commissioned officers and privates—dashed forward for the objectives that they had to gain. Conversely, it was Jakaroff, the outcast, who perceived the possibility of storming Geckenli from the flank and routing out its garrison, who had hitherto interposed a galling fire to the general advance upon the northwestern face of Kirk-Kilisseh.

Jakaroff's horse had been long since shot under him. He was on foot. He wore a dead officer's cap, with the Bulgarian Lion rampant over the visor, and he swung a saber in his right hand as he stumbled on ahead of the great strong infantrymen, any one of whom could have carried him easily on his back.

In the early stages of the battle none of the men knew who he was. They took him for a reserve officer newly joined. But gradually the fact of his identity spread through the ranks, and by some freak of battle psychology the men followed him as they would not follow their regular officers. There were old sergeants in the ranks who could remember him as a subaltern, and they aided and abetted the transfer of the Regiment's allegiance to this prodigal son.

The 45th stormed through a raging maelstrom of fire, burst into the village and fought their way from house to house, from garden to garden, driving out the Turks at the bayonet's point. The gunners were killed beside their pieces, and the cannon turned about and trained on the remnants of the Turkish garrison.

Then, lured on by the yelling demon that had been Stoyan Jakaroff and so completely out of hand that their own Colonel could not control them, the Regiment dashed on. It was as if the blood-lust that had seized Jakaroff, and lifted him to an hysterical pitch above all reckoning with pain or fatigue or other earthly matters, had gripped the entire Regiment.

Big, stoical peasants who had never known a moment's hysteria in their lives dashed on after the worn-out hulk of a man who should have been dead, yelling at the top of their lungs,

"*Na nos! Na nos! Na nos!*" which may be translated as "Now, the knife!"

They swept the Turks out of Geckenli, pushed rapidly up to Saliorloff, carried it by sheer weight of numbers and physical strength, with the cold steel—Jakaroff screaming ahead of them—and even advanced beyond this point, in response to his restless urgings. By this time they had out-distanced their supports and were confronted by large fresh bodies of the enemy brought up for a desperate attempt to recover the guns lost at Geckenli.

The Division-Commander sent repeated orders for the 45th and the fragments of the other regiment in the brigade still with it to fall back, but Colonel Radkin found himself utterly unable to influence his men. They were obsessed now by the need to save the guns that they had taken. Jakaroff, slavering at the mouth, his eyes red and hollow with exhaustion, coughs splitting his narrow chest, begged and besought and plead with all to stand up to the task of saving these trophies. And finally, when some sense had been beaten into the weary fanatics, they commenced to retire reluctantly at three o'clock in the morning, dragging their guns with them by hand through the mud and darkness.

A heavy rain had come up since afternoon, however, and the ground had been transformed into a quagmire, in which the guns stuck hopelessly. Some of the men were disposed to side with Jakaroff and stay by the guns all night, but finally, when the scouts had brought in word that the Turks had ceased to advance, they consented to drop back to rising ground and camp until dawn.

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IN THE morning the work was commenced all over again. Additional Bulgarian troops were brought up, and the other columns of the Third Army that had been battering the Turkish front and right wing converged to the attack. The task was by no means so difficult as the day before. Superbly served, the Bulgarian artillery crushed out the resistance interposed by the crippled Turkish guns. The infantry went forward with the same dash and vim. Again Jakaroff, whom the surgeons had looked to see die overnight, got himself into the front ranks of the 45th and again he breathed the strident hysteria of his abnormal personality into these ranks of stolid peasants.

The 45th ceased to be a regiment of soldiers; it became for the time being a band of fiends incarnate, who did not know fear, pity or obedience, except to the will of the arch-demon who staggered ahead of them and urged them on with queer, inarticulate cries of inhuman fury. By ten o'clock in the morning—it was the 24th of October—the 45th had pushed its way into the vineyards northwest of Kirk-Kilisseh itself. After a desperate fight, in which bayonets were opposed to rapid-fire guns and shrapnel was fired from street to street, they cleared the vicinity of Turks, and forced their way into the streets of the town, already beginning to fill with detachments of the other corps that were pressing back the Turkish defense.

The main body of the Turkish Third Corps, which had interposed the defense of the day, were now in full retreat southwards; but a strong rearguard under Hilmi Bey, composed of tried Nizam troops, had taken up a position on the heights of Bujukdere east and south of the town, and were strenuously opposing all attempts to hurry the retreat.

To tell the truth, most of the Bulgarians were too worn out by a week of constant marching and two days of desperate fighting to want to pursue any farther, but the 45th and Jakaroff were not to be expected to let themselves be governed by ordinary human standards. Tired they were, yes; and they had spread a trail of death and devastation behind them broad as Death's own plowshare could trace. They had taken eighteen guns, seven hundred prisoners, three thousand stand of arms, three colors, and other booty beyond computation, besides having accounted for some thousands of Turkish killed and wounded. But this was not enough.

So long as Turks stood in ordered ranks to resist Bulgarian attack, so long the Berserk fury possessed Jakaroff and the men, who are known in the Bulgarian army to-day as "Jakaroff's Devils." Colonel Radkin did his best to rally his men, according to the orders issued to refrain from pursuit, until the reserves of the Third Army, coming up by way of Jundala and delayed by heavy roads, should be able to get in touch.

But he, to whom his men had always offered obedience as prompt as willing, found himself no longer in command. Stoyan Jakaroff, the outcast, the man who had been cashiered, whose story had been held up to young officers as a warning, this Stoyan Jakaroff had turned the tables upon all concerned and become the Regimental commander.

Heedless of all advice or command, impossible to put under arrest—there was not an officer or man in the Regiment who could have been induced to arrest Jakaroff that day—he was busied organizing an attack upon the Turkish rear-guard position above Bujukdere and the lime-kilns. He had artillery brought up, this man without military rank or status, save that of a hospital steward; he arranged his men cleverly so as to gain all possible cover from the houses and depressions in the ground; and after an artillery duel, in which, as usual, the Bulgarians gained the advantage, he began to press his infantry attack.

By this time the Bulgarian commanders had realized that there was nothing for it but to back up the madman. The attack must be made successful. They could not risk a failure now, when victory was in their hands.

But after all it was Jakaroff's feat, and it was he who carried it through. He had seen at once the costliness of a frontal attack upon the strong Turkish position, and he had also perceived the wooded nature of the ground on the Turkish right and rear. Two of the reserve battalions of the 45th he despatched across a small brook that traverses this suburb of Kirk-Kilisseh and had them advance on a line parallel with the Janno road, threatening an enveloping movement, while he led the rest of his force through the lime-kilns in a series of careful rushes under protection of his artillery.

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THEY talk about it still around the mess-tables in Sofia, Tirnova, Samakov and many another garrison-town; they will talk about it for years to come. There was never a prettier tactical solution of a real live problem ever devised. The ingenuity of it can not be put down in cold print. It was beyond that. It was artistic, a stroke of military genius.

But it took a brave man to put it through. The Turks on the heights above Bujukdere were the best Nizam battalions in the Third Corps. They had seen seventy thousand of their countrymen blown to atoms or put to flight in the past two days; and they were out for vengeance at any cost. They stood there on the hilltops with their lives to sell for the honor of the Padishah and the glory of Islam. They would not retreat.

Three times Jakaroff led the 45th up through the lime-kilns, and three times the head of the assaulting column was smashed to flinders by the fire of the Turkish machine gun platoons. Then the flanking detachment that had been sent up the Janno road succeeded in enveloping the Turks' right flank, and the starch was taken out of the defense. The bravest troops will stand up to all kinds of punishment, but turn and run at the threat of being surrounded.

The fourth time Jakaroff stormed up Bujukdere the men behind him could fairly sense the relaxation in the resistance they encountered. Most of the Turks stuck to the last moment, but they were confused and fired wildly, and the Bulgars came on with the cold steel. That was the end.

With his own hand, Jakaroff shot a Turkish color-sergeant and took the colors. He was one of the first over the rough entrenchments on the heights. Always ahead of the bayonets, he led the final brisk rush that cleared the ground of the enemy.

There was a thin trickle of scarlet down his chin, but it did not come from any wound. It seemed as if he had made good his boast that he could not die. By now the ignorant peasants of the Regiment fairly worshiped him with a superstitious awe. He seemed more than human to them. What ordinary man could accomplish the things he had done, much less what man of his puny build?

Yet as Jakaroff stood beside the Regimental colors planted on the hilltop, clutching the blood-stained lance for support, he wavered and would have fallen had not several of the soldiers leaped forward and caught him—just as Dimitrieff galloped up with Radkin and his staff. Jakaroff was coughing pitifully, shaking violently from head to toe, gasping for breath. But he contrived to straighten to attention and bring his saber to the salute.

"You are hurt?" questioned Dimitrieff.

"No—General," panted Jakaroff.

Dimitrieff surveyed him keenly for a moment.

"For what you have done," said the General, at last, "by all military rules I should have you shot. But instead I give you back the rank that was taken from you, and, if you live, you shall be advanced according to your merit."

"I—can—not—die," answered Jakaroff, with the blank trust of a little child.

And as he spoke, he pitched forward dead at the General's feet.

Something like a sob swept through the close-packed ranks of infantrymen, but Dimitrieff sat his horse in silence, staring down at the dead man on the ground, looking forward, perhaps—who knows?—to the bloody welter of Lule Burgas a scant week ahead of him. After a while the little fighter looked up.

"He was right, this man," exclaimed Dimitrieff. "He can not die. The name of Stoyan Jakaroff will be immortal to all Bulgarians. God save the Czar!"

"God save the Czar!" thundered back the regiments.

Then, like a Spring torrent in freshet, they burst into the "*Sheumy Maritza,*" stamping their feet on the ground to mark the cadence, and six sergeants picked up what was left of Stoyan Jakaroff and laid it aside to dig a grave on the spot where he had fallen.

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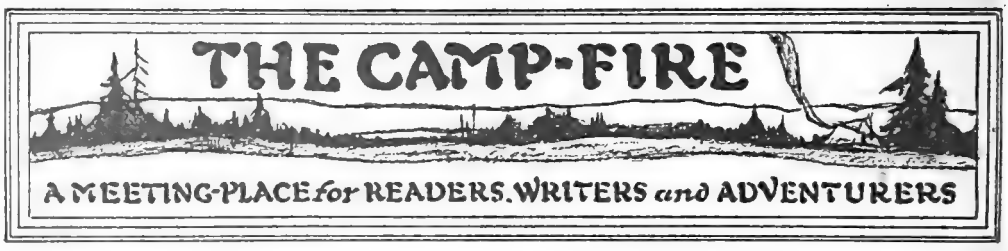

IT HAS been said of Edgar Wallace that probably no other English writer knows so much about the English soldier, and that no other writer save Kipling is so well known to the English soldier. As we already know, he joined the army at seventeen and served six years in the infantry and on the medical staff. In 1896 he went to South Africa for the Mashonaland Rebellion. For his care of the wounded in the Benin Expedition he received the unparalleled honor—for a private soldier—of being thanked by the British Admiralty.

To you who are familiar with the big names in the newspaper field of the world at large Edgar Wallace needs no introduction. Within two years of leaving his $3-a-week (?) job in the army he was earning $10,000 a year. Reuter's agency; then chief South African war correspondent of the London *Daily Mail*. His was the greatest "beat" of the war—the terms of peace three days before they were officially made known. British stock rose $150,000,000 on his cables.

After the war he founded, for a syndicate, the *Rand Daily Mail*, the greatest of the South African dailies. A year later he returned to England to take up duties under the Harmsworths. He edited the London *Evening News*, when only twenty-nine. But he has been called "the Sherlock Holmes of correspondents," and his gifts in this line sent him again on the "war-path." Concerning which we'll have some interesting little anecdotes at some other meeting of the Camp-Fire. Also an occasional story by Mr. Wallace.

OUR new three-part serial by Mr. Chalmers, "A Gentleman from the Sea," beginning in this number, goes back to the days of old Sir Henry Morgan, dealing with the times following those of our former serial, "Silver-Shoes." Yes, of course, there are pirates in it, but the story shifts from the West Indies to England, bringing a pirate or two along, but centering the interest on even more interesting characters.

Here's one little incident from Mr. Chalmers' own West Indian experiences:

While I was a planter's overseer in the mountains of Jamaica, a big centipede got up the leg of my pajamas in bed and I had to lie until help came at dawn. I was bitten three times on the left leg before I got clear, and was a pretty sick man afterward. The best part of the story is the after-delirium of fever when I cunningly devised a trap to bring back the centipede from the crack he escaped into—plain sugar. I killed him three days after the adventure while I was still crazy as a tick.

I VENTURE you've not forgotten "The Orchid of Allure," that tale of Patrick Casey's several months ago. Also I venture you'll not soon forget his "Tropics" in this issue. Here is a word concerning it from Mr. Casey. His incidental remark about the little church in Bocas finds an echo in my own mind—I think I never knew so poor an object make so strong an impression—but his fountain, when I saw it, had become a sanitary-looking spot in a sanitary-looking public park. For Bocas has fallen under the influence of a big fruit company and has been housecleaned. By all accounts it needed it as much as any place on earth.

I have come in personal contact with several scourges. Once, down in Panama, at a way-station called Bocas del Toro (The Mouths of the Bull), we alighted to drink from a public fountain. The most distinguishing features of the village were a wooden church painted in exact imitation of Castile soap, with wavy pink stripes through its blank whiteness, and this rude outdoor font. The theatrical troupe of which I was a part found a myriad of red ants forming two lines to and from the basin. We did not drink. On inquiring further in the village for some water, we found the *barrio* visited with smallpox. Overwhelming fear lent wings to our flight and *en masse* we, one and all of us, were vaccinated the following day. Once our arms were bandaged we felt safe, and safe we afterward proved to be. No one of us had contracted the plague.

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STILL another time, in Singapore, there was an outbreak of bubonic plague. The way I escaped scatheless that time was by keeping my system inoculated to drunkenness with gin-*pahits*. Alcohol and stimulants, in the case of bubonic plague, have proved an infallible anti-toxin. The hired carriers of the dead, old beach-combers mostly, go reeling along the byways under the effect of liquor, hardly capable of upbearing the poor victims of the disease.

While in Panama with the theatrical troupe, I met Colonel Gorgas and Shanton, who was the head of the Zone police. At that time their greatest fight was with the Yellow Jack. Hence, I laid my story in Panama and at about the time they were engaged in their winning fight. The different aspects of the Jack that came to my notice I have attempted to incorporate into the story.

THE brown woman and the indolent degenerating white man have many counterparts in all tropical lands. You will find them especially in Coolie Town of old Colon—that filthy negro slum. I remember a case that forced itself on me when I was in the Government service in Manila. A young fellow from North Carolina had a desk next to mine. He had formerly been employed, back home, by a large tobacco concern. One pay-day several of us went out to "do" the town. After an evening at a native theater, we adjourned to a café. The fellow drank heavily and then all of a sudden burst into copious tears. He was thinking of the girl he left behind him. He was living "without benefit of clergy" with a mestiza woman in the walled city. I heard, some time afterward, that he committed self-destruction. The animal life, at the outset so novel and fair, had sickened him.

WAKEMAN really was a mining engineer with dreams of the future gold mines of Colombia. In real life he afterward found not a gold mine but an emerald field in the heart of Colombia near Bogota. It is an ancient deposit that was worked by the Indians long before the coming of the Spaniards. Wakeman now measures his wealth in gold mines in Alaska also, and in an unworked jade mine in the entrails of Siberia. He was staked to his first undertaking by a liquor dealer who is a common friend. His real name is ———.

IN CONNECTION with his "Clearing a Snarl" in this number, Frederick William Wallace writes me as follows:

Fishermen will take big chances in order to get a trip. I, myself, have shot out of a harbor in a vessel to make sets, while a fleet of ten others were hanging to their hooks inside. And that was in December. The riding-sail incident happened while I was aboard the same vessel, and I was one of the gang which grabbed it. I've also done my share in reefing a fores'l, running before the wind in a southeaster thick with snow. The "scandalizing" is—well, fishermen are human like the rest of us and they have their intrigues, but, if it is found out, the matter will be discussed among the gangs at sea until the whole fleet knows it. I've had to listen to some in my day, and I think if some of the aristocrats in the home ports could have heard their family affairs discussed with delightful freedom over the foc'sle table or the bait-boards, they'd have had a fit. What a fisherman don't know he'll invent, so the story loses nothing in the telling. Hanson, you will remember, was the skipper with whom Winslow had a contest when he started life as a skipper, in "The Making Good of Skipper Winslow."

HERE, again, is the brief explanation of our identification-cards. They are offered free of charge to any of you. All we ask is that you comply carefully with the simple directions as they appear below in italics:

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag of aluminum, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

C. S. HANSEN—his "Shark's Teeth" in this number—has lived in most American cities, roamed the West and liked it, and "slummed three pretty full years through Great Britain." Some day he'll tell us about slums and cities—I've a letter from him on that subject which, to me, is most interesting reading.

Meanwhile—

Down in Dover among the fishermen I met some divers, the prince of whom was an old man nearly eighty. He took me over the waters and showed me the Goodwin Sands, where more vessels lie wrecked, perhaps, than in any other spot in the world. The man was a master story-teller; his color was perfect. We "palled in" together, and I lived through his adventures breathlessly.

Afterward I met my diver friend in a London

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slum where we lived for a year together. The old chap had finished with one medium and had conquered it, and now that his heart could no longer stand going down in one hundred and eighty feet of water, he planned to conquer the air. Yes, down in a queer, obscure London slum this plucky old fellow, formerly king among divers, now king among beggars, was inventing a "helicoptic" aeroplane! He was going to take me up on his first trip.

We lost track of each other, and after a couple of years of wandering I went back to London to look him up. But great gray London had swallowed him, as it does so many solitary figures. No one knew where he had gone; there was no trace of him. I wonder if the old diver has at last gone soaring in the spirit through the blue medium, with that young heart of his undaunted, unconquered by age? What an Iliad his life would make!

(*Continued from page 2*)

The British now started to take notice of me and I was sentenced to be shot on sight. A few weeks later in an English paper I read the notice of my death; I found out that they had shot a German professor who had curly hair like mine.

LATER I was caught by some of Lord Dundonald's cavalry and put in the jail at Barberton. I was examined (not tried) and sentenced to be shot at eight o'clock the next morning. The jailer came in the cell and handed me a towel with one end wet to wipe my face. When he turned his back to go out I threw the towel over his head, pulled him back on the floor, stunning him, and then tied the towel around his neck so that it would choke him. I took his helmet and outfit and a Webley revolver, put them on, walked out of the one-cell jail, snapped the door behind me and found myself among thousands of British troops. I worked my way to the edge of the British camp, got a horse and, amid a hail of bullets, escaped to the Portuguese frontier. Later, carrying despatches to Europe, I was captured in Lorenzo Marques, Delagoa Bay, and I put in seventeen days in the fort jail.

When I was in the jail I worked out a scheme to take the jail and the fort, or caserne, as it is called, with the help of some other Boer prisoners. When the Portuguese heard of this they put me on a troopship and sent me to Portugal with sick troops, 140 of whom died on the voyage. I was so sick with fever that they gave me as a hopeless case to the medical authorities at Naples. I was expected to die by the good nuns of Santa Maria. But I escaped death, and the hospital a few nights later, and, with the help of the Belgian Consul, got to our legation in Brussels. I told them great news and I was made chief of the Intelligence Department.

MY NEXT trouble was the "Cape Town plot." I put up a scheme to Oom Paul to destroy Cape Town by dynamite and fire. It looked good to him, so I went to the Cape, with my plans. I kept our commander supplied with intelligence from the British lines. I was about to make the old town a mass of ruins when, three days before the final deed, I was captured by the British while I slept in Somerset House. Some one had been a traitor.

I, with others, was tried and sentenced to death. The whole country was then put under martial law. We were to be shot in batches and I heard the others pass my cell to take the train to the interior of the Colony where they were shot. I was with the last batch. Knowing that I possessed some valuable secrets, the British tried to get them from me by bribes, threats and torture. My hands were ironed behind me and I was made to sleep on my belly on that account. They also put my legs in figure-eight irons. I was in an ammunition-pit in the Cape Castle in complete darkness for a month, sometimes without water for days. The press of the world made such a fuss over the shooting of the Boer prisoners that my sentence and the sentence of General Kritzinger were commuted to life imprisonment in irons. I was sent in solitary confinement in irons to Bermuda in the S. S. *Harlech Castle*. On the ship I was chained to the wall in the hold in darkness for forty-seven days—but I am not sure of the time; I might be a few days out. I was nearly mad.

IN BERMUDA I was put in what was known as the "cage," especially constructed for convicts. After being there for seven months I, with Fritz Bosch and Willie Dutoit, broke from the jail and our irons after three months' work and Morse alphabet signaling on the walls. Bosch was shot and later died; Dutoit, after swimming from the prison island to the mainland, sank from loss of blood and exhaustion on the beach, for we swam for two hours and a half. He was surrendered to the British by a lady whom he had asked for help. I finally escaped to America on the yacht of ———, of the New York Yacht Club.

WENT to Congo into cannibal country; served there as an officer. Stayed there till Russo-Japanese war broke out. Went to Manchuria with Russians as correspondent for the *Petit Bleu* and allied papers for nine months. Served on some papers in Morocco for six weeks.

Came to United States. Employed as newspaper man. Free-lanced in Madero revolution. Hunted in South America. Bill before Congress for introduction of foreign animals.

Went to Brazil to lecture on the elephant for use in the South American forests. Returning, was attacked in Kingston riots, while autoing with wife and sister-in-law. Had to fight for our lives, with S. S. Wortley and a friend named Hintz, against the mob. Had nothing but hammers from the auto tool-box. Put half a dozen in hospital. Troops shot three, wounded thirty-one, in fight later to quell riots. Our auto was destroyed by the mob.

Have hunted all over the world—Africa, India, Australia. Have explored in the Lado, in South America, and am on my way to explore Matto Grosso, the unknown central South America. Have been actively identified with the Bull Moose party.

THE Adventurers' Club has no connection with the Camp-Fire or with this or any other magazine. In answer to queries, however, I have embodied all the information concerning the Club into a statement that will be sent to any of you on request.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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WANTED —MEN *and* ADVENTURES

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the Camp-Fire, free of charge, to such of our readers as may care to avail themselves of it. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or part of a letter. Any inquiry for adventures sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor.

WISH to organize an expedition to Central America for adventure and profit. Know where there is placer gold on the beach, vast forests of valuable hardwood, pearls, hunting and fishing in territory uninhabited. Also splendid opportunity for trading, very profitable, with the natives. Am an experienced master mariner, both steam and sail, and well acquainted on the Central American coast.—Address CAPT. H. C. GRIMM, 26 Burnside Ave., San Francisco, Cal.

AGE 23, 5 ft. 7, 130 lbs. Will absolutely not fight unless have to do it. Three and a half years' experience in American railroading (transportation departments). Now train-despatcher. If you have something you want done and it is honest, I'll be glad to hear from any kind of proposition.—Address No. W 170.

AGE 24, best of health, absolute abstainer. Use tobacco and either good American cuss-words or a gun as occasion demands. Electrician and lineman; carry a union card; experience in five States. Good automobile machinist and driver. Understand more or less of steam-fitting. Have run and helped install small power stations, using steam and distillate for motive power. Machinist; have run a power lathe. College man; track and football teams. Want to go to South America and a chance to get ahead on my own merits and work. Want an idea of where I am going, and that there will be a chance of something doing for me before I start, if possible, for I have a fair thing where I am.

Will appreciate any help and be glad to give any one anything on subjects that I am familiar with.—Address No. W 171.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE

AS STATED in our last issue, our "Wanted" department has grown until for the past few months it was bigger than the whole "Camp-Fire" used to be. This month we have saved space by using smaller type and by cutting the long items to their essential facts. As explained last month, we see a way to save still more space and yet keep the department as efficient as before.

Each month only notices of adventures or expeditions seeking men will be printed. All notices of men seeking adventures will be omitted. This will accomplish just as much as heretofore. Indeed it will simplify matters and save time. If you are one of those seeking adventures, send us no notice; all you have to do is to watch this column for opportunities offered.

Such unpublished items as come in to us before our last month's warning will appear in our next number (January, out December third). After that only items asking for men will appear. *We are now taking no more notices from men seeking adventures.*

I have a "hunch" that this new plan will do far more than save space and that the department will grow into something bigger and more practical even than it has been. We'll wait and see.

WOULD like to travel in Europe or any part of the world. Weigh 195, and all muscle and do not smoke, chew or drink. Have been in the ring about ten years. Do not care about the money. Have been all over the U. S. Don't care where I go or what I do as long as I travel. Had quite a few adventures in ten years of wrestling and fighting and am better now than ever.—Address JOE THOMAS, Wrestler, *The Billboard*, Cincinnati, Ohio.

NEWSPAPER man, age 23, of Southern stock and soldier family. Wish to join some exploring expedition, where I could harden up, and also find material for newspaper and magazine articles.

Although "roughing it" is rather out of my present line, I have never "quit" on anything I ever took up. Willing to obey commanding officers; some knowledge of fire-arms. Willing to go any place at any time, provided that there is new country to be seen and information to be found.—Address No. W 168.

YOUNG man, West Indian college graduate, would like any kind of remunerative job. Fought under Madero and Diaz. Fair shot. Now working as chainman in City Engineer's office, San Francisco. Prefer something with some adventure.—Address No. W 167.

WE TWO can get along in English, French and German. About the same size, 5 ft. 11; 140 and 155 lbs. One from Ouachita Parish, La., the other from Tallapoosa County, Ala. Have traveled in Holland, Germany, France, England, Russia, Siberia and other parts of Asia; from Ontario and Winnipeg to Mexico City; from New York City to Los Angeles. One of us has a college degree and a working knowledge of surgery, asepsis, antiseptics, etc. The other, not having finished college, has been actor, railroad worker (in Russia), and salesman. We have good knowledge of chemistry. Both athletic, horsemen, good shots with both rifle and revolvers; can handle small craft; swim; manage some automobiles, and know motors and gas-engines; one of us smokes; neither uses alcohol or liquor to any extent.

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One is 25, the other 24. Must be sure there is money in an adventure before we go. Don't fear anything or anybody. One of us has had yellow fever (and most others).—Address RAE ADDISON or AL BANCROFT, 1470 Bushwick Avenue, care C. Weil, Brooklyn, N. Y.

HAVING in mind the cruise announced in your July issue, which promises to prove so rich in adventure, am trying to get together a few good live fellows to make almost the same trip by automobile.

Am well educated, an athlete and a graduate architect. Age 23, 6 ft. 2; 192 lbs. Born in Virginia but went West in 1901. Have crossed the continent seven times and covered most of the Southern and Western States. In and around San Francisco during earthquake and fire of '06; prospected the Mt. Diablo country; horse-puncher, mule-skinner, draftsman, bookkeeper, hobo, bricklayer and automobile driver and repair man. Seven years' experience with motor-cars of all makes; good driver for rough country.

This trip will be no place for mollycoddles, but will require men who are men and can accomplish things. Initial outlay would amount to about $3,000 or a little less; but if properly handled, sufficient profit could be made to well repay any outlay.

The trip will not be the conventional dash, which has been accomplished once or twice before; but I will endeavor to leave the beaten paths as much as possible in search of unusual sights, people, and experiences. To any writer or photographer, with ability to depict unusual happenings, this is a rare opportunity; or for any one with a taste for adventure and sufficient gravel in his crop to take hold and stick.—Address No. W 169.

WISH to get in touch with party or parties going inland in South America. Age 27, American, surveyor, tramp, sailor, miner, cow-puncher (on a fork handle as well as a "fence"). Traveled extensively, was prospecting in Northern Mexico when the trouble got up there and helped it along a little. I can "man" most any kind of fire-arms, handle a boat or cook a good meal; speak some French, Italian and Spanish—"Mex."—Address No. W 165.

BEING a "Seeker," would like to convene with some party who could use a red-head set on 190 lbs. of meat, 5 ft. 9, from the ground. Have had military experience and appendicitis. Know electricity, steam and gas engines, can shoot or run, was raised in the mountains of Virginia and don't drink. Am a cheerful idiot and a good listener.—Address E. R. FRIEND, 1972 W. 89th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

WANT to join some party for any country or sea. Some experience on land and water; fair seaman. Age 20, American, 5 ft. 10; 142 lbs. stripped. Fair shot with rifle and do not booze. Not afraid of hard work. A sticker; some military experience; healthy and broke. Can leave any time.—Address R. W. SWALLEY, 94 Virginia Street, Seattle, Wash.

WANT young man or boy, age 15 to 23, who owns or would buy motorcycle or car for tour of entire U. S. No money needed outside of machine. Tour to last indefinitely. Will guarantee right party will have a good time. They must leave booze by the wayside and be willing to learn how to sell a line of merchandise and to stick their nose any place where there is something doing in the way of excitement.—Address BUD KENO, care Wehrly Mfg. Co., Canton, Ohio.

WANT to hear from party going on expedition and needing companion. Anywhere or any place; I want to see some of this world and get rid of this overcrowded city. Age 20, 5 ft. 8½, strong, healthy.—Address S. M. ROSENTHAL, 35 Orchard Street, New York City.

BEEN in the P. I., China, Mexico and Central America; U. S. Marines 4 years and qualified as sharpshooter; can shoot with any of them with a high-powered rifle or pistol. Used to hardships and tropical climates. Ready for anything. Used to handling natives in P. I. over 2 years. Like excitement. Age 23, 67 in., American, sober. Let me know all in the first letter.—Address JACOB V. HAUGHAUT, Lock Box 214, Everett, Wash.

AMERICAN, age 19, 5 ft. 8, 140 lbs. Good health, good-natured, honest, Protestant, good memory, and am broke. I want to make a few thousand inside of two years, and will take a risk to get it. Must be legitimate. Draw fairly well, know stenography and typewriting, and a little surveying; can shoot.—Address No. W 156.

ENGLISHMAN, age 22½, 5 ft. 11. Healthy and athletic; public school boy, can ride and shoot a bit. On for anything.

This by way of preface. Most at home in Paris and London, and if any one wants guide, secretary, etc., I think I can produce the goods.

Have kicked about since I was 17; would like to work in big cities among big things. One year in Canada and been in every town of any size and all through the prairies and B. Columbia.—Address No. W 161.

WANTED, some one with a reasonable capital to go with me to the Philippine Islands and develop a gold mine I discovered there. On one of the southern islands in a semi-savage district; would have to go armed, as the natives might dispute our rights.

This prospect was shown me in the early 1900's by a native in return for a kindness shown him. He—or I either at the time—did not know the value of this discovery, but since coming to the States and having seen gold in the raw I now realize the importance of this discovery. This gold is almost free; is situated in a waterway, a small mountain stream, only 16 or 18 inches deep, and 6 or 8 feet wide. The gold is found in a soft rotten quartz, I guess it would be called, and the stone is fairly rotten with it. I think it will run at least $1,500 to $2,000 to the ton, maybe more, maybe less. The stone is so soft it can be cut with a hatchet. I bored the earth all around and found the prospect to run at least 80 feet in all directions. Did not make a very good examination while there, as the natives were hostile. Could go right back to the place in the dark, as I have the best of reasons for remembering this place.

For some one who has a bit of money that is not working, who wants to make several thousand per cent. on his money and who is willing to take a chance, I offer such an opportunity. There would hardly be any chance of a loss in above, as I take the Manila *Times* and have never seen any news of any one who has opened a mine in that locality.

There is also another advantage in this. There is plenty of wood and water, and this prospect is less than two days' march from one of the best harbors for small craft in the Philippines, and all transportation could be done very cheaply. Also there is a fairly good trail that runs close to this prospect. I would have to be guaranteed a good salary and expenses before I would start. Also a percentage of the net output from the mine, as I am now making a good salary and have others dependent on me for a living and would have to provide for them while away.

Can furnish highest of references as to character and ability of making good all promises, both from personal and official sources.—Address No. W 79.

EX-ARMY nurse, one enlistment; telephone lineman and cow-puncher. Weight 140, 6 ft., good health and fair marksman. Would like to go to South America or Africa. Not much cash, but can pay my way to any starting-point. Now employed as Emergency Nurse.—Address R. T. WIGGIN, 4536 Harriet Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

AGE 20 6 ft., 148 lbs. stripped. High school education; worked on an engineering project as rodman and have lived in the open practically all of my life. Much interested in Mexico and South America, but will go anywhere. Crack rifle and revolver shot, using any kind of arms with ease. Expert chauffeur and mechanic on gas cars. Also experience as a printer. Money only a secondary consideration.—Address No. W 159.

EX-SOLDIER looking for any kind of adventure. Traveled quite a lot. References as to character cheerfully furnished.—Address No. W 158.

LIEUTENANT in Philippine Constabulary 3 years; in Moro country part of time. China, Japan, Straits Settlements and Ceylon, and around Europe a little. Speak fair Spanish. College graduate. Good shot with rifle, fair with revolver. Good drill-master. Game for anything on the level. Prefer tropical climate.—Address No. W 157.

RED-BLOODED man, age 30. British Army, 1898. Active service S. Africa at 17. Have had enteric fever. Five years in India. Various parts of world, from navy to command of men. At present in Toronto, Ont. Ready to go to any old place for some real excitement; don't mind risk, providing fare paid to starting-place. Never had a day's sickness for past 11 years. True as steel, good comrade and good shot. Single, 5 ft. 8, weight 157.—Address No. W 155.

AGE 36, 5 ft. 10, 155 lbs.; best of health, army service, good shot, has own rifle, 30-30. Do not believe in talking, but doing. Prefer South America, or any tropical country. Can go any time or place.—Address No. W 153.

THREE good men for any expedition or venture needing men with nerve and sand. We have been nearly all over this country and part of Canada. Want to hit the trail again. South America preferred. Anything as long as it is on the level.—Address No. W 154.

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AGE 22. On the move 6 years. England, River Plate, Durban and most of U. S. Good sailorman. Good knowledge of coast and inland pilotage. Fair shot. Healthy and good powers of endurance. High school education. Will go anywhere on any date, but can furnish no money.—Address No. W 150.

BORN in Wyoming; age 28; left home at 15; fire-room of steamer; 2 years in Chile and Peru; 1 in Honduras and Salvador; 4 in China. At home in saddle; fairly good with six-gun and rifle. Will return to U. S. early in 1914, and would like to find some one from Arizona or Nevada as partner for prospecting in those States.—Address No. W 157.

AMERICAN, age 26, 6 ft., 175 lbs. Have been in 7 or 8 different countries and some pretty tight places, but never saw anybody yet that could keep me there. Good rifle shot. Would like to get in with some expedition bound for South America or any other part. Have had good education and am no bum.—Address No. W 177.

AGE 19, 5 ft. 8; 140 lbs., strong and healthy. Would like to go with some party to any part of the world. Do not much care about pay, but would like some adventure. Good shot with rifle.—Address No. W 175.

CAN some one use a native Texan ready to go anywhere, any time, as long as there is adventure in it? Age 20, 5 ft. 10¾; 155 lbs. Born on a ranch; punched cattle all my life and can ride and shoot where I look. Punched cattle through Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico. Roamed over all the West and Old Mexico, and would now like to try some other country. Am not one to quit when things are hot. Would willingly give my life for adventure.—Address W 176.

WANT to join some party or expedition to the tropical wilds who would take a man who's broke but not afraid of work or danger and used to a rough life. Worked in railroad and lumber camps; been in Alaska and done quite a bit of mushing, and believe me this here wild and woolly West looks mighty tame to me, and am getting bored to death with monotony—have to have some excitement for a dessert. Age 25, 5 ft. 8½; 170 lbs. Good habits and health. —Address FRANK KIEVE, 221 Third St., San Francisco, Cal.

AGE 21, 5 ft. 7; 154 lbs. Do not drink, am not considered a fool, common-school education and in the best of health. Left N. Y. when 17 and hoboed 2 years; worked in a grocery, as freight handler, in cold-storage house, and on a ranch. Learned to ride a horse a little. Worked on Santa Fe railroad, on smelter as laborer, ran a pool-room, and as a baker. Learned as chauffeur but could not land a job; managed a store; pretty good salesman. Been all over U. S.

Have a share of the roaming spirit and believe I am not a coward. Would go anywhere to make a decent living and stand my share of the hardships and adventures.—Address No. W 174.

WANT adventure of any kind with excitement in it. Flat broke and would like to make some money if I can, but I would go for the sake of adventure and expenses. Age 20, 5 ft. 9½. Can handle rifle or revolver well enough to hit a barn at least. Only satisfied when in the open with a gun.—Address FRANK FARMER, 2347 W. Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE.—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with any old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relatives Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

WANT to hear from William O'Meara of Waterford, Ireland, who shipped as seaman with me in 1886 out of London in the bark *Guiana* of Glasgow to Falkland Islands, Maritius, Demerara, back to London, across to Newport News, and then we stayed in the coasting trade for about a year.—Address PHILIP MCGOVERN, 920 Lackawanna Avenue, Elmira, N. Y.

WISH to get in communication with some one who served with Miles G. Wiley, Private Co. I, 11th Ill. Infantry, and Capt. Co. E., and Major 7th Ill. Cavalry.—Address JOHN M. GRAHAM, Deming, New Mexico.

ALWAYS looking for news of my brother, Conrad A. Engesser, who served on U. S. Monitor *Monadnock* during Spanish War, then settled in Tacoma, until about 1904. About 1906 he went to Panama on the Mounted Police in Culebra. Think he might have been with Madero in 1910-11. Last I saw of him was when he sailed for Panama on Thanksgiving 1909. Is about 38 or 39 years old and ran away from home when he was fourteen to join the navy.—Address ERNA ENGESSER LANBLY, 1232 54th Street, Borough Park, Brooklyn, N. Y.

WILL William Le Vonde please write. Very important. —Address W. L. CUMMING, care ADVENTURE.

AN OLD mess-mate would like to get in touch with Clarence Rae, P. I. R. Clarence and I went through some tough ones together. If I can locate him I would like to have him accompany me into Mexico and, between us, we could dig up some queer things in strange places.—Address No. L. T. 173.

JIMMIE GIBNEY and F. A. Sherwood write to E. J. Roese at St. Louis. 3668a Botanical Ave., St. Louis, Missouri.

WANT address of Isaac Raansvaal, private in Company I, 9th Infantry, U. S. Last heard of on way to Philippines. Was in Dallas, Texas, in the encampment in 1909. —Address DICK NAIL, 1804 Clarence Street, Dallas, Texas.

WOULD like to hear from Dis Holbrook, son of Dr. Holbrook of New York; and the Deny brothers.—Address CHARLES D. BEAN, 9 Masonic Temple, Geneva, N. Y.

WOULD like to hear from my uncle, Harry G. Robertson, who served in U. S. Custom House of Manila. Last heard from in Seattle, Wash.—Address R. Pyron Connolly, La Grange, Ga.

WILLIAM MCELWAIN, please open up and let your old pal know your whereabouts. Lots of things have happened to me since we parted in Marion in 1907.—Address ICH, 1626 Truxton Ave., Bakersfield, Cal.

WANTED, address of Willis (called Red and Kentuck) Cory, was in Philippines 1903-4, and 5 in Tex. Last heard of in California, 1906. Sometimes called Wins Golden, from Greenup, Kentucky.—Address No. L. T. 79.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

F. E. SMITH. Resigned from Annapolis to enlist in navy for Spanish War. On *Olympia* at Manila; Philippines; Boxer trouble. Last heard from was 2nd Lieut. of Marines. Word wanted by DANNY SHARPE, 537 Temple St., Los Angeles.

PETE MEISSNER. From Grajervo, last heard of in Chicago in 1903. Word wanted by C. MEISSNER, Box 38, Lemon Grove, Cal.

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CHAS. BUSH. Left U. S. N. at Mare Island in 1911. Please write FRED SHACKLER, Quartermaster's Corps, Fort Sill, Okla.

JOHN W. ("RED") BARDSLEY. Last seen in Benson, Ariz., on the *Press*. Please write B. D. W.—Address No. L. T. 152.

BIG MENTUSHA. Please write Leo Y. Downman, Janes Road P. O., Vancouver.

"LEE" or P. M. MORRIS. Last heard of in Valparaiso as locomotive engineer; 5 ft. 6, dark, age 41. Word wanted by his mother, MRS. M. A. BETTIS, Gen. Del., Seattle, or his sister K. E. ROCKWELL, 125 W. Main St., Medford, Ore.

JAMES BARWICK, THOMAS BARWICK, A. K. BARWICK. In the 80's lived respectively in St. Louis, Linn Co., Kan., and New York. Please write G. H. BARWICK, care Mrs. Ida Cody, 234 Winston St., Los Angeles, Cal.

ROLAND HENRY CRANE. Age 34, brown curly hair, small gray eyes, tall, plays piano and violin, red mark on cheek, ridge on back of left-hand middle finger. Want word of or please write his wife, MRS. CRANE, Walton Hall Farm Dairy, Cherry Lane, Walton, Liverpool, Eng.

WILLIAM G. TICE, age 41, last heard from in Ft. Worth in '05 or '06, blue eyes, scar on one cheek, short, rather stout. Invalid mother is worrying. Please write at once. MRS. MAMIE CARTER, North Augusta, S. C.

J. CLAYTON RANDALL. With Lorenz Bros., 1911-2, last heard of at Lake Placid. Please write DON I. BAILEY, 525 Kenilworth Court, Clinton, Iowa.

JACK COSTELLOE. Australian. Last heard of in Cartagena. Please write Ed. Bushby ("Cockney").—Address No. L. T. 113.

PATRICK, MICHAEL and JAMES CUNNINGHAM. Last heard from respectively in Ft. Worth, Tex., 1870; Lower Cal. 1877; New Orleans, 1882. Natives of Co. Galway. Word wanted by their brother.—Address B. CUNNINGHAM, 4004 W. Lake St., Chicago.

ANY one who remembers "Lintic" O'Sea or "El Rayo," scout and military detective, 3rd V. S. I. at San Fernando, Pampanga, 1900-1. Please write him.—Address No. L. T. 95.

ED. (WESSEL) DECKARD. Once soldier in Philippines. Last heard from 4 years ago in London. Please write R. CURRIER ERICKSON, Redondo Beach, Cal.

J. W. McKENZIE. Formerly hospital apprentice U. S. N. Saved lives of my wife and daughter in Peking last year. Will send thanks and a check for definite news of him. Wish to reward.—Address C. J. CALHOUN, 1312 14th St., San Francisco.

FRANK MILLER, JOHN CRAMFORD, LEE CRAMFORD. Lived in Ennis, Tex., 1892. Also WILLIAM HARSON. Last heard of at Picquet Barracks, London, in 2nd Bat. 1st Scots Guards. Please write HARVEY MORRIS, Co. D, 22d Infantry, Texas City, Texas.

CAPT. VAUGHN. Once of Canadian Scouts and Remington Guides. He, or any who were in the Guides, Roberts' Horse or Colonial Light Horse, please write the "little Canadian."—Address PERCY TRESSIDDER, 2705a N. Spring Ave., St. Louis.

CAPT. F. T. PARKER. Soldiering in Mexico the last few years. Word wanted, alive or dead.—Address J. H. C. MURRAY, Staff Serg't., R. Can. Engineers, Signal Hill, Esquimalt, B. C.

THOMAS J. KELLY. Last heard of in Co. F, 9th Infantry, 1905. Ex-prize-fighter. Write (very important) to JOSEPH R. BRANDAMOUR, Cornelia St., Plattsburg, N. Y.

T. S. M. COTTRELL, CORP. McEWEN, COOPER, SERGT. DACOMBE. Once of Troop B. M. M. P. Rhodesian campaign 1896-1897. Also CAPT. NESBITT, V. C., and any others with us. Please write M. M. MARSDEN (ex-corp., M. M. P.), 875 14th Ave., W., Vancouver, British Columbia.

HOWARD IRWIN. Sailed from 'Frisco on the *Maitai*, May 31, 1911. Please write CHAS. G. HARVEY, Shoshoni, Wyo.

GULLIVER. Was building railway in Iquique, Chile, 1898. Word wanted.—Address S. B. H. HURST, care ADVENTURE.

JESSE E. SHERICK ("Pat"). Was in U. S. Army in Alaska and Cuba. Last heard of in Co. I, 14th Infantry, Cebu, Cebu, P. I. 1909. Please write PAUL CONNER, Howard, Kans.

JACK BONHAM. Born Hastings, Eng. Band of Royal Sussex 1900-6. To Sherbrooke, P. Q., Canada, March 1906. Last heard from Aug. 1906, Sherbrooke. Natural musician. Word wanted by mother. Address MRS. JEAN BONHAM, care ADVENTURE.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

GORDON LAW, SIMON P. CULP. Please write WM. F. MOLLENHAUER, JR., Gen. Del., Owatonna, Minn.

CHARLES GOOLRICK. U. S. N. Hosp. Corps till Winter of 1902-3 at Norfolk. Please write old shipmate.—Address Box 511, Johnston, Pa.

BEING half-blind and barred from my old roving life, would like to hear from my old shipmates and companions.—Address F. E. VAN LEUE, Hornell, N. Y.

A. S. O'CONNOR, BOB ROSS, JIMMIE VAN DAMME, HANS KUFEKE, JACK GRIFFITHS, JULIAN HARRIES, JACK GARDINER. In E and C Troops, B. S. A. P., at Salisbury, Hartley Hills and New Fort Martin, Rhodesia, 1896-7. Word wanted. Write W. E. PRICKETT, care ADVENTURE.

EDWARD J. RAEDER. Last heard of in Manila. Write DONALD F. MCGREW, care ADVENTURE.

MARTIN LANE. Klondike, late U. S. Army. Last seen in Mexico City. Please write S. H. RIESENBERG, care ADVENTURE.

CHARLIE SCHAEFFER, DICK MARTEL. Respectively in Sonora and Hermosilla in 1887. Write WM. E. SAUNDERS, Torresdale, Philadelphia, Pa.

CHARLIE SUTHERLAND. Late of Bechuanaland Police, Jameson Raid, Boer Wa., in charge Union Castle docks at Cape Town. Write TALBOT MUNDY, care ADVENTURE.

JACK PROUT, FRED SCOTT. Respectively in Porcupine 1908 and newspaperman in Penn. Fall of 1911. Write R. W. COATES, care ADVENTURE.

GEORGE DEAN. Of Mass. Sailed on whaling-bark *Canton* in Hudson's Bay 1893. Write STEPHEN A. REYNOLDS, care ADVENTURE.

OSCAR SMITH. Australian from Melbourne. Actor, ventriloquist. Last heard of in Kimberly, S. A. Word wanted by sister.—Address MRS. MYCE DAVIS BOYLE, 3039 Morgan St., St. Louis.

PERCY M. DU BOIS, R. R. PLUM, JOE ENSCOE, CHAS. CARRUTHERS, LESTER SELIG, THOS. L. HOGAN, ANDY OSBOURNE. My old comrades sailing on the *Evening Star*. Please write CAPT. A. E. SELIG, 36 Monte Vista Ave., Oakland, Cal.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned to us as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

Julla A. Sill, New York; Horatio Langford King, Galveston, Texas; W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; W. Mack, Pachica, Mexico; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillions, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manson, Chicago, Cal.

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